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CATHOLICISM IN MEDIÆVAL WALES

J. E. DE HIRSCH-DAVIES, B.A.

JESUS COLLEGE, OXFORD

Author of

Y TADAU APOSTOLIG.

Translation of the Works of the Apostolic Fathers. (1898.)

YN EGLWYS ÂR DIWYGIAD. (1902.)

Translation into Welsh of

LIFE OF DEWI SANT, by OWEN RHOSCOMYL.

SELECTIONS FROM EUSEBIUS' "PRÆPARATIO EVANGELICA." (1904.)

Translated with Introduction and Notes.

POPULAR HISTORY OF THE CHURCH IN WALES. (1911.)

HISTORY AND ANTIQUITIES OF S BEUNO'S CHURCH, CLYNNOGFAWR. (1912.)

Translation into Welsh of

CREDENTIALS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. (1915.)

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BY

J. E. DE HIRSCH-DAVIES, B.A.

WITH INTRODUCTION BY THE LATE
RIGHT REV. J. C. HEDLEY, O.S.B.
BISHOP OF NEWPORT

R. & T. WASHBOURNE, LTD.
PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON
AND AT MANCHESTER, BIRMINGHAM, & GLASGOW
1916
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CENSOR DEPUTATUS.

Imprimatur.

EDM. CANONICUS SURMONT

VICARIUS GENERALIS.

WESTMONASTERII

Die 7 Novembris, 1915

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INTRODUCTION

THIS book is a reproduction, much enlarged, of a paper read by the author at the National Catholic Congress held at Cardiff in July, 1914.

There is probably no living Catholic or Non-Catholic who could treat of the Catholicism of Mediæval Wales with the knowledge and sureness of Mr. de Hirsch-Davies. When he was received into the Church two or three years ago, he was a well-known Anglican clergyman in North Wales, and had already published a history of the Church in Wales, which, although written from an Anglican point of view, is marked by a fair and candid spirit, and bears the impress of the hand of an expert. A student, possessing the Welsh language perfectly, and thoroughly at home in the vernacular records, he was just the man who might be expected

to give an authentic and illuminating account of a period of Welsh history which has received very scanty justice, even from Catholic writers.

His first chapter is devoted to a brief but telling picture of the Catholicism of the early Church of Wales, up to the Norman irruption. There are few Non-Catholic writers in these days who venture to deny that the early Celtic Church was united to the rest of Christendom in allegiance to the See of St. Peter. The remarkable assertion of Mr. Willis Bund, that early Celtic Christianity resembled nothing so much as modern Nonconformity, like similar pronouncements with respect to the Christianity of St. Patrick, has become out of date after the labours of Professor Bury, Professor Lloyd of Bangor, and others. Mr. de Hirsch-Davies here accumulates historical testimony showing that, although no Welsh manuscript now exists that is older than the twelfth century, yet the records of the "age of the Saints," the words of Gildas, and the text of numerous collections of documents

that are evidently far more ancient than the date at which they were collected, prove to demonstration that from the earliest period the Celtic Church celebrated Mass, used the Sacraments, believed in the Real Presence, honoured the Blessed Virgin, and was in communion with the Papal See.

But it is with the Catholicism of Wales in the Middle Ages that the present useful volume is chiefly concerned. Catholic Wales of the Mediæval period is much less generally known than Welsh Christianity of the centuries from A.D. 400 to, say, 700. Mr. Davies begins his researches with the Laws of Howel the Good, who flourished about the time of St. Dunstan, and died in 907. The six centuries of Welsh religious history that elapsed between that date and the Reformation have never received adequate attention either from Catholics or Non-Catholics. One principal reason of this is that our historians have not been able to read Welsh—and the religious records of Mediæval Wales are almost exclusively in

the vernacular. They consist chiefly of two classes of writings—chronicles and poems: the former compiled for the most part in the great monasteries, and the latter produced by the Bards at the Courts of the Welsh Princes. It is only very recently that these sources of religious history have begun to be scientifically reproduced and used. This is more emphatically true of the poems of the Bards. Bardism, as I need not say, was an institution peculiar to Wales. Every prince or chieftain had his Bard or Bards, whose duty it was to compose verses on present and past events, and to chant them to the accompaniment of the Welsh harp at banquets and festivals. These Bards did not always live in friendship with the Church. We often find them denounced by the Friars for evil life and unseemly language. But on the whole they reflected the current life of the country, and their poems present a vivid picture of settled and dominant Catholicism. As an illustration of the way in which light is thrown on the religion of

the Welsh people by the Bardic poems, I may point to the collection published in 1910, by the Rev. Hopkin James, which he calls *Hen Gwndidau*—being *Sermons in Song*. We find in these compositions—the originals of which are chiefly at Llanover (Monmouthshire)—all the variety of feeling which existed in Wales in the reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth; lamentations for the changes that are taking place, regrets for the Mass, the Confessional, and the old Church services, and at the same time a note of bitter discontent, and of welcome to the novelties of the so-called reformers. Materials like these exist in greater or less abundance for the whole of the Middle Ages, and Mr. de Hirsch-Davies has not failed to make use of them.

There can be no doubt that English Churchmen in the Mediæval period undervalued and slighted the Catholicism of Wales. No one who is acquainted with the writings of Geraldus Cambrensis, or, again, with the "Injunctions" of Archbishop Peckham, can

fail to see that, by the English, the Welsh were looked upon as badly instructed and semi-barbarous. No doubt in Wales, as in all sparsely populated countries, there were many districts where priest and sacrament were rare and the Word of God seldom heard. Moreover, the Normans occupied too many of the Episcopal Sees and parishes, and were not too exemplary in pastoral work among the native inhabitants. But in spite of these drawbacks, it is now seen to be absolutely true that Catholicism in Wales, from the days of Howel Dda to the reign of Henry VIII., and even later, was as deeply and fervently Catholic as any other part of Christendom. Wales had few considerable towns; but what we know of Cardiff, for instance, or Newport, or Haverfordwest, or Pembroke, or Kidwelly, or the buried city of Kenfig—to confine ourselves to South Wales—demonstrates a normal and fervent Catholic life. Numerous great Abbeys, like Neath, Margam, and Strata Florida, were shrines of veneration for kings and nobles,

and upheld Catholic learning and the majesty of the liturgy. The Dominican and Franciscan Friars travelled over the whole country, and penetrated everywhere, and the people learnt their prayers, followed the Mass, listened to sermons, prayed to Mary, went on pilgrimages, and died in Christian fashion, as did their fellow-Catholics across the Wye and the Severn. All this Mr. de Hirsch-Davies brings out with learning and fulness; the contents of his book will be, to some extent, new to all his readers. Those who remember his brilliant paper at the National Congress at Cardiff, in June of last year, will welcome this enlargement as a permanent memorial of that Congress, and, we may hope, will renew their interest in the work of the conversion of Wales.

✠ JOHN CUTHBERT HEDLEY, O.S.B.

September, 1915.

CATHOLICISM IN MEDIÆVAL WALES

CHAPTER I

The subject of the religious beliefs of the Welsh people in the Middle Ages is one that has not been adequately presented to the modern Welsh mind. Were it not for the industry and zeal of our antiquarian societies, it is doubtful whether the student of Welsh history would succeed in passing the charmed barrier of the Puritan era, which to most Welshmen has been hitherto the *terminus a quo* of all that is greatest and most fruitful in Welsh history. It has not yet quite dawned upon the ordinary Welsh student that the Puritan era, on the other hand, and for weighty historical reasons, may be quite truly viewed as the *terminus ad quem* of a golden period of our national history. The

deeper we delve into the records of the past the more do we perceive the profound character of the religious change that took place after the Reformation—rapidly in England, but slowly in the Principality of Wales.

In the following pages the main facts bearing on the religious life of the Welsh people in pre-Reformation times are placed before the reader. It is not pretended that these facts are now being placed on record, for they are already perfectly well known to the historical student. The writer merely claims that the facts are here placed in their proper setting. Within the natural limits imposed on a modest brochure of this kind, it is not possible to go into details; in fact, one of the problems that the writer finds himself at every turn obliged to solve is, not what can he put in, but what must he leave out. Welsh mediæval literature is a very difficult field of research, and it is by no means an easy task to present the results of one's investigation in the form of a summary. This is particularly the case with the

subject of religious belief, where the evidence is often so elusive and impalpable, so hard to tabulate and classify. There are documents in Welsh history in which the verbal references to definite religious beliefs and customs are of the scantiest; and yet, if we divest ourselves of the legal conceptions of evidence, we often rise from the study of such documents with a most definite conviction of the real character of the religious system that stands behind it and reveals itself through it. It is difficult to understand how anyone who is even moderately acquainted with Welsh historical records can fail to arrive at a clear conclusion as to the true character of the old religion of the Cymry. And yet the following quotation from Mr. Willis Bund's *Celtic Church of Wales* is, or used to be, representative of a widespread opinion:

"Nonconformity comes far nearer the old tribal idea of Celtic Christianity than anything else. A Welshman who studies his country's history sees that there is nothing

so near the old Welsh religious system as Nonconformity."

This is one of those strange historical judgments that take one's breath away. Some of our leading Welsh historians are evidently afflicted with colour-blindness, for, however real their sympathy with the Protestant principle, this vision of a primitive Nonconformity established around the altars of the British Church, and offering the sacrifice of the Mass, is one that has not been vouchsafed to them. It is hard to understand in what cryptic sense modern Nonconformity can be made to resemble the religion of the old Cymry; but, as the argument has been put forward with all the apparatus of historical learning, the best way to dispose of this picturesque anachronism is to produce afresh the evidence of history.

It may be mentioned, in passing, that the antithesis between the Celtic and the Latin type of Christianity has been greatly overdone. It is quite legitimate to speak of a Celtic type of Christianity and a Latin type—

both ancient and modern. Celtic civilization, with its political, social, and legal institutions, differed in some important respects from Latin civilization, and had a character of its own. But these differences, however important in the eyes of the historian, cannot reach a point where they are likely to affect the essential character of Catholicism. They are purely external, incidental, subsidiary.

These internal varieties or aspects of the one great whole, due to the national *ethos*, do not touch the question of the Unity and Homogeneity of the Catholic Body. The tribal idea of Christianity was in no respect inconsistent with the institutions of the Catholic Church. The *Laws of Howel Dda* were framed for a tribal form of society, but the Catholic Church, with its long-established institutions, was the living centre of that society—the soul that dwelt serenely and fruitfully in the tribal body.

A Welshman who studies his country's history without blinding himself with preconceived notions will look in vain for his-

torical evidence of the idea that early Celtic religion was a kind of Protestantism "born out of due time."

The religious history of the mediæval period is not so well known to the general public as the earlier—the age of the saints; and yet Welsh mediæval literature reflects very fully and unambiguously the inner life of the Catholic Church and the religious devotions of the Welsh people.

Much of this evidence is contained in our bardic literature, so much of which is fortunately preserved in that great corpus of Welsh literature—both poetry and prose—the *Myfyrian Archæology*.

Welsh bardic literature in particular from the eleventh to the sixteenth century is full to overflowing of the most definite and spontaneous testimony to the religious faith of our forefathers.

The Sacrifice of the Mass, the invocation of saints, the doctrine of Purgatory, auricular confession, penance, fasting, the cult of the Blessed Virgin Mary, extreme unction, the

supreme authority of the See of Peter—these are the constant and essential elements in the religious as well as the secular poetry of mediæval Wales.

Dr. Rhys Phillips, in his book on *The Romantic History of the Monastic Libraries of Wales*, says that "a close examination of the manuscripts of the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries reveals most of the bards as pious Catholics working in unison with, and receiving much of their inspiration from, the monks, who had generally espoused the Welsh national cause, and suffered for it."*

The scores of poems to "Mair," the Virgin, to the saints, and to the various abbots of contemporary monastic houses, form a library of Roman Catholic poetry probably unequalled in any country of the same size at that era. The elegy on S. Cunedda is in the *Book of Taliesin;* while addresses, odes, or *cywyddau*, to SS. Beuno, Brigid, Cadoc, Cawrdaf, Collen, Curig, Cynhafal, Cynog, David, Doged, Dwynwen, Einion, Gwen-

* *Romantic History of Monastic Libraries*, pp. 15–30.

ffrewi, Illtud, Mair Magdalen, Margared, Mihangel—next to Mair in popularity—Teilo, and others, have been copied and recopied into a large number of manuscript collections.

Welsh literature, in fact, owes its earliest and noblest achievements to the old Welsh monasteries. This fact is at last becoming increasingly evident to the student of Celtic literature, but for the sake of those who are not students in this particular branch, this must be emphasized afresh, for it is very closely connected with the subject of this treatise.

The literary activity of the Welsh monasteries covers the whole period from the time of Gildas to the dawn of the Tudor period.

It is true that the courts of the Welsh princes were to some extent centres of literary life. This is evident from the testimony of the *Welsh Laws of Howel Dda.* But this qualification must be added: that the literary interest was probably confined to the two departments of (1) bardic lore of

a somewhat restricted and professional kind, and (2) genealogical records.

The monasteries were undoubtedly the principal centres and sources of culture. The Celtic literature that influenced Europe came from the inmates of the monastery.*

The very earliest writings that have survived, such as the *De Excidio Britanniæ* of Gildas, which is in a sense our first Welsh history, and Nennius' *Historia Britonum*, both hail from some monastery in Glamorgan.

It is unfortunate that the early devotional literature of the Cymry survives in such attenuated form. We would gladly exchange a whole library of the ponderous and dreary Genevan theology for a few copies of the Welsh *Missal.*

These were, naturally enough, the first objects of attack by the iconoclastic bigots of the Dissolution period.

Not only did the monasteries produce a very considerable portion of our early litera-

* *Cf.* Iolo MSS. 555-6 for long list of early Celtic "colleges."

ture, such as the *Lives of the Saints*, the *Romances*, and the *Chronicles*, but they also preserved and transcribed old documents which would otherwise have perished.

Writers such as Giraldus Cambrensis, Geoffrey of Monmouth, Caradoc of Llancarvan, and the compiler of the *Liber Landavensis*, had access to ancient records, which they adapted to suit new literary and historical theories, or to meet new ecclesiastical circumstances.

The basal document of all Welsh history is the *Annales Cambriæ*. This is supposed to have been compiled in S. David's monastery, a conclusion which is drawn with some confidence from the strong local colouring of some of the entries contained in it. From the *scriptorium* of Llanddewi-Brevi—memorable for the great council with which the name of S. David is connected—came the valuable *Llyfr Ancr*, the Book of the Anchorite.

Perhaps the most interesting literary document in connection with Welsh history is the *Black Book of Carmarthen*, the oldest extant manuscript in the Welsh language. It was

written in the twelfth century by some Welsh Augustinian monk in the Priory of Carmarthen.

From the same corner of Wales emanated the famous *Black Book of S. David's.*

Margam Abbey is well known for its *Annales de Margan,* a chronicle that covers the period A.D. 1147-1232.

Many of the treasures of this old abbey are preserved in the British Museum, still unpublished. These include a twelfth-century copy of Domesday Book, the *Gesta Regum* and *Novella Historia* of William of Malmesbury, and the *History* of Geoffrey of Monmouth.

The Margam collections of charters and deeds form probably the most complete original series in existence relating to one monastic establishment. It was at this famous abbey that the *Red Book of Hergest* was first heard of, which contains so many exquisite old Welsh romances. It was from this source that Lady Charlotte Guest translated the *Mabinogion.*

The mother church of the diocese, Llandaff,

rejoices in being the source of the gospel of Teilo, sometimes called the *Book of Chad;* also of the *Liber Landavensis,* which is one of the most valuable ecclesiastical documents in Welsh history.

It was compiled early in the twelfth century, but it embodies very much older material of unequal value.

Neath Abbey, one of the first Cistercian houses in Wales, has lost nearly all its literary treasures. But in the fifteenth century the monks had a copy of a manuscript called the *Greal.* This was said to be the great *San Greal,* the romance of the Holy Grail. To this abbey is also attributed the Welsh version of the *Parvum Officium Beatæ Mariæ.*

The editor of the *Welsh Historical Manuscripts Report* is of the opinion that the *Book of Taliesin,* one of the *Four Ancient Books of Wales,* came originally from Neath.

Strata Florida, the Westminster Abbey of Wales in the Middle Ages, was famous for its learning. It was here that *Brut y Tywysogion,* the Chronicle of the Princes, was com-

piled. It appears that the monks of Strata Florida compared notes at regular intervals with the chroniclers of the Abbey of Aberconway, so as to insure a correct account of historical events. A *Codex* of the *Annales Cambriæ* is also attributed to these monks, as well as parts of the *Red Book of Hergest.* Valle Crucis Abbey is perhaps the most picturesque of all the ruined abbeys of Wales. It was renowned for its generous patronage of men of letters. Its praises have been sung by the most prominent bards of the Middle Ages, such as Gutto'r Glyn and Guttyn Owain, whose history and bardic compositions are closely associated with the annals of Valle Crucis. Here lie the remains of Iolo Goch, the bard of Owen Glyndwr; and Iolo's hymns were chanted in the monastery choir. It appears that a *White Book* once belonged to this abbey, but it is now lost.

Strata Marcella, Ystrad Marchell, a Cistercian house in Powys, is supposed to have been the source of the thirteenth-century *Life of Gruffydd ab Cynan.*

There is in the British Museum a fine collection of early Welsh poetry, of which Dr. Gwenogfryn Evans writes that, "judging by the orthography, its original was written in the thirteenth century, inferentially at Strata Marcella, by the scribe who wrote the *Book of Aneurin*."

The *Dream of Rhonabwy* is supposed to have been, in its present form, written at this abbey; also the *Mabinogion* of the *White Book of Rhydderch*.

The *Black Book of Basingwerk* is an echo of the literary activity of the Abbey of Basing. This is a copy of the *Brut* of Caradoc, by Gutyn Owain, who brought the record down to his own day.

And so we could go on indefinitely; but this brief list of some of the principal monasteries of old Wales, and their literary labours, is enough to convince the reader that Welsh literature owes an enormous debt to the monastic houses, and that it was generously fostered by the Church.

Valuable evidence as to the nature of early

Welsh religion may be gathered from a brief examination of the religious terminology of the Welsh people.

The late Professor Hugh Williams, a very high authority on the early British Church, writes:

"The Faith in Britain was the Faith in Western Europe generally; its Church had the same organization of ministers, in which bishops and presbyters became *sacerdotes*, the Lord's Table an altar. To these *sacerdotes* belong the power of binding and loosing. Behind all was the wonderfully powerful force of Monachism."

And again:

"Throughout the West *one* language universally prevailed in religion. Gildas quotes a Latin Bible, and the literature he read was Latin. Long before Gildas, even S. Patrick, the apostle of Ireland, though a Northern Briton, wrote in Latin.

"The native language, it would seem, was only used in preaching to the people. The result of this close contact with the Latin

world—if one may thus describe the early ecclesiastical situation—was that *our religious language has become steeped in Latin.*" *

The following short list of the principal Welsh religious and ecclesiastical terms will illustrate this; and though the list may be dry reading to some of my readers, it is desirable that the point should be made clear before proceeding further:

Eglwys, *ecclesia ;* offeiriad, offrwm, and offeren, *offerre,* denoting the Eucharistic sacrifice; baglawg, *baculus,* an ecclesiastic entitled to carry a crozier; periglor, parish priest, *parochus ;* trined or trindod, *Trinitas ;* bedydd, *baptismus ;* senedd, *synodus ;* clerigwr, *clericus ;* pregeth, *prædicatio ;* cardawd, *caritas ;* gosper, *vesper ;* gras, *gratia ;* crêd, *credo ;* erthygl, *articulus ;* crysfad, *chrisma,* the old Welsh term for Confirmation. "The second sacrament," says Canon Griffith Roberts of Milan, in his *Grammadeg Cymraeg,* "is the Bedydd Esgob a elwir *Crysfad.*" Cablyd, Difiau Cablyd, *capillatio* (the monks were

* *Christianity in Early Britain,* 78 et seq.

apparently tonsured on this day, Maundy Thursday); calan, *calendæ* (calan *par excellence* is January 1, but we have also Calan Mai and Calan Gauaf); ynyd, *initium* (dydd Mawrth Ynyd=Shrove Tuesday); cabidwl, cathedral chapter, *capitulum;* urdd, *ordo;* Garawys, Lent, *quadragesima;* segyrffig (unfortunately obsolete), *sacrificium;* Ystwyll, Epiphany, *Stella* (*festum Stellæ*=Gwyl Ystwyll); phïol, vial, *phiala;* paeol=holy-water stoup; llên, *legenda;* elusen, *eleemosyna;* y fall, the Evil One, *malus;* naf, *numen;* pader, *paternoster;* gwers, *versus;* bendith, *benedictio;* merthyr, martyr; llith, *lectio;* nadolig, *natalis;* paradwys, *paradisus;* pechod, *peccatum;* addoli, *adoro;* achub, *occupo;* arawd, *oratio;* yspryd, *spiritus;* pylgain, *pulli cantus;* gŵyl, *vigilia;* swyno, an interesting word, now meaning to bewitch or charm, from *signum*, making the sign of the Cross, hence to bless; dwfr swyn=holy water; sagrafen, *sacramentum;* allor, *altare;* ysgymmuno, *excommunico;* uffern, *inferna;* dofydd, divinity, *domitor;* cappan, cope, *cappa;* cymun, *com-*

munio ; cyffes, *confessio ;* mynach, *monachus ;* mynachlog, from *monachi - locus.* Lloc, which is derived from *locus,* is a constituent of many Welsh place-names. A notable instance of its use as signifying a monastery is contained in the *Black Book of Carmarthen :*

> " Ni phercheist ti creiriau
> Na *lloc* na llaneu "
>
> " Thou hast not respected relics,
> Nor monastery nor churches."*

It also survives in the form of llech (sometimes erroneously interpreted in Welsh place-names as *stone* or *slate*)—*e.g.*, Llechgenfarwydd, Llechydwr, Llechgomer, Caellech, Penllech, etc.

Cil or kil, cell, is from *cella* (Columba was called Columcille, the dove of the cell).

S. David's was called Kilmuine (*i.e.*, Kilmynyw); disart or disserth, from *desertum,* a lonely place, a monk's retreat; caregl, *calix,* chalice; côr, *chorus ;* clas, an old word denoting a cathedral chapter, from *classis,* or perhaps *clausum.* A cognate word, " clos,"

* Black Book, p. 58.

means a close, cloister, monastery, from *clausus*. This latter word is often applied to monasteries: " Abad i'w *glosydd* rhwng bedw gleision " (Gutyn Owain). Syber, *superbus*.

We could go on indefinitely with the list of Welsh religious terms derived from Latin, but these examples are enough to prove how largely we have borrowed from the parent language of Western Christendom. So that, apart from the evidence of Welsh history, we have the clear and significant evidence of *language*. The Welsh word for religion, *crefydd*, is a notable instance of this. The word *crefydd* in pre-Reformation times meant, with scarcely an exception, not what it means nowadays, the abstract theory or principle of religion, vague enough to include all kinds of theistic belief, but the definite profession of religion in the monastic sense. It meant the religious life, consecrated and followed under the organized discipline of the Catholic Church. *Crefyddwyr* meant those who were under religious vows. In early Welsh literature *crefydd* was of the

masculine gender, but in modern Welsh it is feminine. In fact, it represents in its change of gender the evolution of religious faith from the dogmatic and definite to the undogmatic and indefinite.*

The Puritan, "a good man in the worst sense of the term," may be said to have changed its meaning with the change of gender.

Crefydd Gwyn, *e.g.*, meant the Order of White Monks—*crefydd* being the specific term for a *religious order*. This is the invariable meaning attached to it in our oldest Welsh literature, such as the *Welsh Laws*, the *Chronicles*, the *San Greal*, etc.

The old monastic or Catholic connotation of the word passed away with the suppression of the Welsh monasteries.

Dr. Hartwell Jones, the author of *Celtic Britain and the Pilgrim Movement*—a most valuable and illuminating work, which throws a flood of light on the Catholic character of early and mediæval Welsh religion—writes as follows:

* See Dr. Silvan Evan's *Welsh Dictionary*, S.V. Crefydd.

"It is difficult to conceive that Catholicism at one time permeated Welsh habits of thought; that its beliefs were jealously cherished; that its theological terminology is woven into the very warp and woof of the Welsh language. Indeed, from the third century to the sixteenth, Wales adhered to the old Faith as rigidly as Spain or Italy at the beginning of the nineteenth. This revulsion of national temperament and reversal of a national bias is one of the strangest psychological phenomena in English history."

After quoting the evidence of foreign writers in the sixteenth century, to the effect that this country was strongly and avowedly Catholic, he goes on:

"Catholicism appealed to the poetical temperament of the Welsh. Underneath the surface there lies in the Welsh nature a vein of mysticism which three centuries of Puritanism have not succeeded in eradicating. A love of symbolism also, an eye for the artistic aspects of the Christian religion, a fervid imagination, and an impressionable

temperament, would naturally find satisfaction in the Catholic Creed and Catholic ritual; in the stately epic of the Christian year, the unbroken round of services, the religious acts by which Christian truths were expressed, and in the warm colouring of Catholic ceremonial. Many instances might be cited from modern Welsh literature by the pens of writers who would repudiate any sympathy with Catholic belief or practice, yet betray an instinctive harmony with the Catholic spirit."*

A more scientific study of Welsh history, and the renascence of genuine interest in archæology and antiquarian lore, have led a new generation of Welshmen to grasp the truth that the heroic period of Welsh history and the golden age of Welsh literature sprang from the heart of Catholicism.

And specially prominent in this ancient literature is the spirit of loyalty to the See of Rome, deep and even passionate reverence for the Blessed Virgin, and a love of the Mass.

And this evidence is not limited to any

* *Celtic Britain and Pilgrim Movement*, pp. 3–6.

particular period; it is true not only of mediæval Wales, but of early Wales as well. Of this early period of Welsh ecclesiastical history, Stephens, in his *Literature of the Kymry*, says:

"The Church had become powerful in Wales, as well as over the rest of the civilized world. Papal theology possessed and directed the human understanding, and gave its impress to all opinions. We have one striking instance of this in the *Awdl Fraith*, which is evidently an ecclesiastical production of the romance era. This might have been inferred from the tone of the composition, its allusion to the *afrllat cyssegredig*, and its Latinized diction."*

He even considers that the immortal Arthur himself, the religious hero, the greater part of whose memorials were found in convents, is partly, at least, a being of monastic creation.

"The Catholic Church," he adds, "was now in its glory and at the height of its power;

* *Literature of the Kymry*, pp. 158, etc.

and now, as at all times, was most studious to conform itself to the improvements of society. It mingled with all things without excluding any; and in Wales, theological modes of thought, feeling, and expression were everywhere displayed.

"The *Mabinogi* of Taliesin is replete with theological expressions."

He attributes the spirit of the old Welsh romances, not to the lay bards, but to the inmates of the monastery:

"Of the fine and high-toned sentiments which breathe through the *Mabinogion*, we have no traces in the works of the bards; they must therefore have emanated from the clergy."

This, it may be added, is specially true of the tales of the *San Greal*, which was supposed to be the cup out of which our Lord is said to have drunk at the time of His Crucifixion, or which contained His blood.

Our earliest Welsh literature, in spite of its mythological background and martial atmosphere, is by no means lacking in definite evidence of a Catholic age. Scattered phrases

and sporadic allusions, as well as explicit references to Catholic truths, all point steadily in the same direction.

The *Book of Taliesin, e.g.*, one of the *Four Ancient Books of Wales*, contains very direct allusions to the religious beliefs of the age.

The Eucharistic sacrifice is designated as the *Urddol Segyrffyc*, the honoured Sacrifice of the Mass. And in the *Awdl Fraith*, the Ode of Varieties, attributed to Taliesin, the Holy Eucharist, as Stephens says, is referred to as the *afrllad cyssegredig*.

Again, in *Eiry Mynydd*, a fantastic, imaginative poem of great antiquity, preserved in the *Red Book of Hergest*, the Holy Eucharist is mentioned in connection with Confession, which is regarded as an essential principle of the religious life:

> "The end of all things is Confession.
> For the sake of God, make a full confession."*

Again, the Blessed Sacrament is desired by the writer as a shield of salvation against the dread decree of the Day of Judgment—

> "Rhag gormeil gofal dydd brawt."

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* *Cf.* Stephens, *Literature of the Cymry* and Welsh Hist. MSS., vol. i., pt. 2, pp. 550, 612, 621, 666, 731.

Llywarch Hên, a sixth-century prince, poet, and probably priest as well, writes:

"Kyn bum kein vaglawc
Bum kyffer eiryawc.
Kyn bum kein vaglawc
Bum hy.
Am kynnwysit yg kyuyrdy
Powys Paradwys Cymru."

"Before I was fair cleric
I had part in prayerful confession.
Before I was fair cleric
I was bold.
I was entertained in the convent house
Of Powys, Paradise of Wales."

The title Hên in connection with Llywarch refers, in the opinion of Professor Hugh Williams, the editor of the *Opera Gildæ*, to his ecclesiastical status—*senior*.

But apart from this external corroboration, the words of the poem itself show that the author was a priest.

In confirmation of this ecclesiastical significance of Hên, he quotes Pawl Hên, the Welsh name for Paulinus, but it is doubtful whether this is a true parallel. Pawl Hên seems to be merely the Welsh form of Paulinus with the Latin terminal *us* lopped off. In

fact, there is on the borders of Cardigan and Carmarthen a church dedicated to Paulinus, called Capel *Peulin*. Paulin or Peulin would easily become Pawl Hên, in which "Hên" is, of course, a mere phonetic adjunct.

In the *Book of Taliesin* (xvii.) we have the following lines:

"Ny byd effeirat.
Ny bendicco afyrllat.
Ny wybyd anygnat
Y seith lafanad."

"There will be no priest.
The wafer bread will not be consecrated.
The perverse will not know
The seven faculties [= sacraments]."*

The primary meaning of *llafanad* is "intellect," or "intellectual faculty," hence its meaning of *faculties* in the sense of means of grace, sacraments.

Anygnat is an early Welsh form of *anynad*, from *an* and *ynad*, unreasonable, contentious, perverse.

A poem in the *Black Book of Carmarthen*, attributed to Meigant, a bard and saint of

* Skene, *Four Ancient Books of Wales*, loco citato (vol. ii., 108 et seq.)

the sixth century, contains a curious proverbial saying:

"Ni chenir bwyeid ar ffo."

"Mass is not sung on a retreat."

In the *Book of Aneurin*, a sixth-century document, we have an interesting collection of phrases, referring to different religious subjects, but which, taken together, point to a decided Catholic environment. They are taken at random:

1. "The Trinity in perfect Unity."
2. "A shaft heavy as the crozier of the principal priest" (*i.e.*, bishop).
3. "They went to *Llan* for penance."
4. "A Llanfawr full of desire for Baptism."

In spite of their meagreness, the beliefs and customs of the Catholic Church in early Wales peep out quite clearly between these ancient lines.

The last quotation in particular seems to point to a period of high antiquity, when the country was being gradually converted from Druidic paganism to the Christian Faith.

The process of conversion from Paganism was always expressed in early Welsh literature as a "desire for Baptism."

The following conception of S. Peter at this very early period is a convincing tribute to the antiquity of the Catholic tradition among the Welsh:

"Caraw voli Pedyr
A vedir tag tew."

"I love to praise *Peter,* who can bring peace" (Skene) *Four Ancient Books of Wales,* ii. 36).

"Tag" seems to be an early form of *tanc*—assuming the reading to be a correct transcription—and "tew" is a form of *taw—tewi.*

Again:

"Oret y Duw buw budyeu
Am byd ryd radeu
Drwy eiryawl seinhau (*i.e.,* seintiau)."

"Pray to the living God for benefits
. . . through the intercession of saints."

The influence of the Latin on early Welsh religious phraseology is well illustrated by the first word in this verse—"oret," from *oro.* In fact, the Latinized diction of the ancient Welsh bards is quite noteworthy.

We have, unfortunately, very few relics of pre-Norman Welsh script to fill up the long gap between the age of Taliesin and Gildas, and the literature that blossomed forth under Norman influence, or at least in Norman times.* But even the Welsh glosses and verses in the Cambridge *Codex of Juvencus* (ninth century), which probably came from the monastery of Llancarvan, contain *englynion* of a highly religious character. The text as we have it is sadly imperfect, but reference is made to *Trindaud*, *Bedit*, and *Mab Meir* : the Holy Trinity, Baptism, and the Son of Mary.

If we had the full text, we should doubtless have ample evidence of the ancient Faith and its liturgical and devotional forms among the old Cymry.

Before we proceed to the evidence of later writers and of mediæval Welsh literature in general, it will be worth our while to dwell for a moment on the picture of early Celtic Christianity, drawn by Gildas in the sixth century. Gildas, the author of the *De Ex-*

* See Prof. Lindsay, *Early Welsh Script.*, pp. 32–40.

cidio Britanniæ, written in some Glamorgan monastery, did not profess to write history. He was a religious and ecclesiastical reformer, and he inveighs against rulers and clergy in a savage and merciless spirit. But in spite of the violence of his language, his writings are very important, for they contain valuable historical information bearing on the religious condition of the times.

Professor Hugh Williams has dealt very fully and critically with the evidence of Gildas in his *Opera Gildæ*, and in his *Christianity in Early Britain*. We cannot do better than quote his estimate of the various historical *quæstiones vexatæ* that emerge from this pregnant period in the history of the Celtic Church. Most of the leaders of the nation, spiritual and political, come under Gildas's unsparing lash—and among them Maelgwn Gwynedd, the *draco insularis*, who was in charge of the defences of the country.

Taliesin was chief bard to Maelgwn at his court in the fortress at Deganwy, in North Wales. Gildas was himself a monk, and

monasticism was already established in the country. In fact, it would seem that it was the religious world outside the monasteries that Gildas criticized so unsparingly.

Now, what has he to say of the Church in his age in Celtic Britain? What was its Faith? its ministry? its relation to Rome?

In the words of Mr. Willis Bund, was the "old Welsh religious system" a kind of foregleam of modern Nonconformity?

The historical evidence must decide what the answer is to be, and the evidence is conclusive. Professor Hugh Williams, who was a thorough Protestant, writes as follows :*

"About A.D. 400 we find that there was in all Christian lands the idea of one Church, called the Catholic Church. Membership of this Church, whether for individuals or for communities, was dependent upon the acceptance of the Faith, and upon general conformity with the existing ecclesiastical order."

The writer admits that the conception of S. Peter, contained in the words already

* *Christianity in Early Britain*, p. 178-180.

quoted—" Caraw voli Pedyr "—is found even in Gildas. Passages in the *De Excidio* show that no other conclusion is possible.

In his *Epistle, e.g.*, Gildas writes in his usual vein of the priests in Britain:

" Sacerdotes habet Britannia sed insipientes, *sedem Petri* Apostoli immundis pedibus usurpantes."

" Britain has priests, but they are foolish, usurping the *Chair of Peter* the Apostle with unclean feet."

The priesthood is referred to as the *sacerdotalis dignitas.* S. Peter is designated the Prince of the Apostles—" princeps apostolorum beatus Petrus." In the *Vita Gildœ* he himself gives an account of his pilgrimage to Rome " to invoke the merits of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, that by their intercession he might obtain from the Lord pardon for his sins."

A still more convincing and pertinent testimony to the contemporary belief in the primacy of the See of Peter is conveyed in another passage of the *Epistle* of Gildas: " Petro *ejusque successoribus* dicit Dominus; et tibi dabo claves regni cœlorum." *

* *Epistola*, iii., 2–3.

He describes the Holy Eucharist as *sacrificial worship.*

In his criticism of the priests in Britain, he complains "that they seldom sacrifice, and never stand amid the altars with a pure heart"—"raro sacrificantes et nunquam puro corde inter altaria stantes."

In connection with the word *altaria,* Professor Hugh Williams is of opinion that even in the time of Gildas there were probably, in some at least of the British churches, several altars—a fact of some significance in relation to the position of the Mass in early Celtic Christianity.

Gildas calls the altar "the Seat of the Heavenly Sacrifice."

There are extant no British liturgical books to supply us with information concerning the ceremonial of the Sacrifice of the Mass in the British Church of that period, but we are told that some idea of its ornate and perhaps lengthy character may be obtained from a study of the Gallic *Mass of S. German,* the Irish *Stowe Missal*—which was in use before

the coming of S. Augustine—and the *Antiphonary of Bangor.*

At their ordination the hands of priests were anointed with oil.

"The hands of priests," says Gildas, "are blessed that they may be reminded not to depart from the precepts which the words express in the consecration."

On this the editor of Gildas makes the following illuminating comment:

"The idea that they were priests as representative of the priesthood of believers finds no countenance in Gildas. The function of the priest, in the words of the *Missale Francorum* of the same age, was: 'ut Corpus et sanguinem Filii Tui immaculata benedictione transformet.'"

It is therefore evident that in Gildas's time the essential function of the priest was to offer the great sacrifice—the Sacrifice of the Altar.

With regard to the Catholic custom of praying for the dead, there is no need to collect the historical testimonies on this

point. The conclusion arrived at by Warren, in his valuable work on *The Ritual and Liturgy of the Celtic Church*, covers the whole of the field with which we are dealing:

"Praying for the dead was as recognized a custom of the ancient Celtic Church as in any other portion of the primitive Church."

The antiquity of this custom in Wales is beyond doubt or cavil, but what is equally important is that it has also survived almost to modern times among the Welsh peasantry.

"The Gwylnos, or wake, which has now resolved itself into a prayer-meeting, is really a lineal descendant of the *Officium Defunctorum*—namely, the *Placebo* and *Dirge*. The exclamation, '*Nefoedd iddo*,' at the grave on the Sunday following the burial is the Welsh equivalent of '*Requiescat in pace*.'"*

As regards bardic literature, there is a total blank between the sixth century and the eleventh. After the return from Ireland

* *Celtic Britain and the Pilgrim Movement*, p. 3.

of Gruffydd ab Cynan in the North, and in South Wales of Rhys ab Tewdwr from Brittany, there was a marked revival of bardism, but the intervening period is mute.

Nevertheless, it is important to remember that, while the Welsh records of this period have now disappeared, they still existed in the time of the literary revival in Norman times; for the bards and writers of the new era had undoubtedly access to many old Welsh records.

Quotations from the early mediæval bards in confirmation of this can be found in Sharon Turner's *Vindication of the Ancient British Poems*, to which the reader is referred. Nennius, the author or editor of the *Historia Britonum*, is an important link between the sixth-century group of Welsh bards—Taliesin, Llywarch Hên, Aneurin, Merlin, etc.—and the *Laws of Howel Dda* and the times of Giraldus Cambrensis; and he had undoubtedly access to old British records then extant, for he mentions the *antiquis libris nostrorum*. His date is about A.D. 800.

It is unfortunate that the learned Asser of Menevia, monk and probably Bishop of S. David's, has in his *De rebus gestis Ælfredi* left us so little information about the religious condition and customs of his native country.

There is no doubt that Rhygyfarch, son of Sulien, Bishop of S. David's, and the eleventh-century biographer of S. David, had at his disposal some authentic records preserved in the Cathedral Library, which had escaped the ravages of the ferocious sea-rovers.*

Giraldus Cambrensis, however, leaves us in no doubt as to the existence in his time of quite a considerable body of ancient Welsh documents.

"This," he says, "seems remarkable to me that the Cambrian bards have genealogies, etc., . . . in their ancient and authentic books written in Welsh."

William of Malmesbury gives similar evidence: "It is read in the ancient accounts of the actions of the Britons."

* See *Introduction* to *Psalter and Martyrology of Ricemarch*, by H. J. Lawlor, D.D.

And again: "These things are from the ancient books of the Britons." *

The reason why one desires to make clear this point touching the authenticity of the early Welsh records must be obvious. It gives added weight to the testimony of the literary documents that have survived from the Norman period, in regard to the early ecclesiastical position in Wales.

The ancient Welsh records have perished *for us*, but they had not perished for the poets and chroniclers and ecclesiastical writers of the eleventh and twelfth centuries.†

It is true that legendary matter is mixed up with the meagre records of the lives of the Welsh saints, and romance with the facts of Welsh history, but no amount of legend and romance can altogether obscure the main lineaments of the deep-rooted realities of the

* *Gesta Regum*, I., § 8.

† Stephens, in his *Literature of the Kymry*, and Carnhuanawc, in his *History of Wales*, two eminent Welsh authorities, are of the opinion that Nennius's statement warrants the belief that there were quite considerable prose histories in Welsh in the ninth century.

religious life of the Welsh people. This life—the spiritual side of the nation—is necessarily written on too large a scale to be seriously affected by the periodic intrusion of the spirit of romance or other forms of literary revivals.

Leaving aside the scanty remains of the Taliesin and Merlin group of sixth-century bards, early Welsh literature naturally takes the form of romance; and in the old Welsh romances—the *Mabinogion*, the Arthurian stories, and the Legend of the Holy Grail—we do not expect to find much authentic history as conceived by the prosaic chronicler; but even the old writers of romance could not write their productions in a sort of psychological vacuum. Although they do not supply us with precise historical records, like the *Annales Cambriæ* or *Brut y Tywysogion*, they could not help letting in the pervasive atmosphere of the age in which they lived and wrote; and thus revealing some of the deeper and finer aspects of contemporary history, especially in regard to social customs and religious belief.

This is a point of some importance, for it enables us to take these old Welsh romances in hand as sources of trustworthy information in regard to the ancient faith of the Cymry. We gather, therefore, from them that the atmosphere of the early romances is that of the Catholic Church, with a pronounced monastic character. In the background we have knight-errantry and the institutions of chivalry, though the latter is more characteristic of the later than of the earlier forms, and belongs to Norman times.

Some of the *Mabinogion* probably represent a period of very high antiquity, perhaps pre-Roman; but in their final form they are permeated with the spirit of Catholic antiquity, and present all the intimate features of a long-established Catholic community.

A few typical instances of this must suffice. As it has been asserted by some writers on Welsh literature that the Cult of the Blessed Virgin is a product of Norman times, it is instructive to note that Nennius (ninth century), in his *Historia Britonum*, which may be

considered as the *fons et origo* of the body of legend and romance subsequently developed and polished by Geoffrey of Monmouth and others, states that King Arthur, in going to battle, wore the image of the Blessed Virgin upon his shield. The original word is *ysgwydd* (shoulder), but this is a copyist's error for *ysgwyd*, shield (*scutum*).*

In the Legend of the Holy Grail, again, the Grail is the natural centre-point of all the symbolism of Mass and Sacrament, and the three Grail-keepers represent the Holy Trinity.

It will be of interest to Welshmen to know that the *locus* of these wonderful Grail stories is probably the neighbourhood of Llantwit-Major, which even to-day has preserved to a great extent the outward marks of its high antiquity and romantic history. In the Grail legend the characters live and move in the odour of Catholic sanctity; they are represented as going daily to Mass before starting on the knightly enterprises of the

* Nennius, *Hist. Brit.*, 49, 64.

day. One of the characters declares, *e.g.*, "I am a Knight, one of the Quest of the Holy Grail. There are many of the Quest labouring in vain, for they are sinners, without inclination to go to Confession. No one shall see the Holy Grail except it be through the gate that is called Confession."

The following are typical quotations:

"When he had confessed and taken his penance, he besought the holy man for the sake of God to give him *his Lord's Body*—'rhoddi iddo Gorph yr Arglwydd.'"

Again: "Peredur was delighted to see the people believing in *God and Mary*."

This is a phrase constantly used in the *San Greal*, as well as in later bardic literature. It was also used in Forms of Bequest. There is also a reference in the *San Greal* to the *Mass of the Blessed Virgin*, the term for "Mass" being *offeren*.

As words are the symbols of religious beliefs, it is important to notice, as the term *offeren* is sometimes confused with *offrwm* by modern writers in dealing with the history of the

Holy Eucharist, that in early Welsh literature no such confusion is to be found.

Offrwm, which is a generic term for "offering," is never confused with *offeren*, which is a specific term for the highest *offering* in the Christian Faith, the Sacrifice of the Mass.

A passage from the *San Greal* itself illustrates this distinction:

"Yna gwarandaw *offeren* aoruc ef cyn y fynet, a phawb a aeth yngaredic y *offrwm* yr anrhydedd idaw."

"He went to hear Mass before going, and all went kindly to offer the honour to him." *

If we now turn to formal historical treatises such as the *Bruts*, we find the same features, the same emphatic testimony to the belief and devotional practices of Catholicism. The importance of the Mass in the national life is illustrated by such an entry as the following in *Brut y Tywysogion :*

"Gwedy hyny nos wyl Fair y Canwyllen y cant Esgob Mynyw Efferen yn Ystrad Flur, a hono a fu yr Efferen gyntaf a ganawd yn yr Esgobawt."

"On the Feast of Candlemas, the Bishop of Menevia sang Mass in Strata Florida; that was the first Mass he sang in the diocese."

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* *San Greal*, § 54.

This was a very appropriate record, considering that Strata Florida, the Cistercian abbey at the foot of Plinlimmon, and the "Westminster Abbey of Wales" in olden times, was the home of this particular chronicle.

The moral of an entry of this kind is very clear. The Welsh *Brut* only professed to register events of national importance. Such an event was the first occasion of "canu offeren" by a Welsh bishop in that particular monastery.

CHAPTER II

For a detailed study of our subject, in more or less chronological order, during the mediæval period our *terminus a quo* will be the *Ancient Laws of Wales*, drawn up in the tenth century by Howel Dda. Of these *Laws* there are three Codes, the Venedotian, the Gwentian, and Dimetian.

These represent the three divisions of Wales into Gwynedd, Gwent, and Dyfed. No literary document in Welsh history can compare with the *Leges Walliæ* as a source of authentic information on the social and religious life of the old Cymry from early times to the Edwardian Conquest. We have here a faithful picture of the domestic life and religious customs of the Welsh people up to the period of the *Statutes of Rhuddlan*, A.D. 1284.

The Dimetian Code best preserves the

substance of the original laws of Howel, but even this is an amplified edition, for it contains a reference to a law of the Lord Rhys, who died A.D. 1197.

In a short treatise of this kind it is not necessary to enter into a detailed critical consideration of the relation of these Codes to each other, and questions regarding the dates of the different manuscripts. The evidence of the *Laws* is, in its broad features, clear and conclusive enough for our purpose.

Howel Dda, we are told, went to Rome, to study the Justinian Code probably, and to secure Papal confirmation for his own Code.

According to these *Laws*, the Church, with its various institutions, was an organic part of the Welsh tribal society, and great prominence is given to the work and status of the monastic orders.

Here we have the primitive use of *crefydd* and *crefyddwr*.

Gwr wrth grefydd was a man under monastic vows, and is clearly distinguished from the

secular priests—*dyn eglwysig wrth urddau cyssegredig.* When we reflect that these *Laws* are not a formal theological treatise, but a dry code of tribal jurisprudence, it is remarkable how full and explicit is the evidence to the Catholic character of early Cymric society.

Papal confirmation was sought lest by any means the Welsh tribal Code should "conflict with the Law of the Church."*

In the text itself the authority of the Pope is clearly recognized. Dr. Robert Owen, an Anglican divine, admits, in his book on *The Kymry*, that "the Welsh custom of consecrating bishops on the Festival of S. Peter's Chair (February 22) seems to imply a recognition of the Roman Primacy."

In the King's Court and in the Tribal Law Court, the priest (*effeirat*) plays a leading part. He was a kind of Secretary of State and Chancellor.

The Cymric tribes had their "men of

* Dimetian Code, p. 165 (Aneurin Owen's edition of *The Ancient Laws of Wales*).

religion" under monastic vows; they had their *periglawr*, or father-confessor, fasting, confession, penance, veneration of saints, Extreme Unction, and the observance of Holy Days—all carefully and systematically arranged for in the everyday life of tribal society as normal matters of daily obligation in a Catholic community.

Although the *Laws* are naturally preoccupied with matters pertaining to the domestic life of the Welsh tribes, the spiritual connection with Rome is remarkably close. We are told, *e.g.*, that for certain specified crimes there was no pardon except by a direct appeal to the Supreme Pontiff.

One of the "three indispensables" of a Welsh Prince was a priest to bless his food and to sing Mass—*canu efferen.*

When a new judge was appointed for the tribal courts, the King's *periglawr*, or chaplain, was to take him to church *to hear Mass.* After that the judge had, in the presence of the priest, to swear by the *relics* and by the *altar* not to deliver wrong judgment. Some idea of the solemn character that attached

to the Holy Eucharist in tribal times may be gathered from a curious bit of folk-lore referred to in the Gwentian Code.

On the subject of beeswax, which was considered indispensable for saying Mass, it is stated:

"The origin of bees is from Paradise, and on account of the sin of man they came from thence; and God conferred this blessing upon them, and Mass cannot be sung without the beeswax." *

We find from the *Black Book of S. David's* † (Introduction, cii) that some tenants paid their rent in wax.

Folk-lore of this kind, like moss on a stone, only gathers around things long established and deeply rooted.

A marked feature in the religious life of the old *Cymry* is the respect paid to relics—*creiriau*. In the religion and in the legal system of the tribe they play an indispensable part. *Nawdd y Creiriau* is frequently mentioned; it means the protection afforded by relics.

* Book ii., cap. xxvii.

† *Black Book of S. David's*, edited by Willis Bund.

Giraldus Cambrensis complains that the Welsh people, in taking their oath, showed greater reverence for the relics of saints than they did for the holy Gospels themselves.

Swearing on relics was the regular mode of procedure in the law courts of the tribe.*

The litigant had to swear at the church where his sacramental bread and holy water shall be—" bara efferen ay dwfyr swyn."

In the *Liber Landavensis* there are references to the custom of swearing on the relics of S. Teilo.†

Even at the time of the Annexation, the respect paid to relics is well illustrated by a letter of Edward I., written about A.D. 1281. It refers to the relics of S. Asaph, the pupil of S. Kentigern, the original founder of that See.

The King proposed that the relics should be transferred from the cathedral to Rhuddlan for the sake of safety.‡

" A legend connected with another British saint affords an interesting example at once of the importance attached to the mortal remains of saints and the competition for them.

* See *Venedotian Code*, Bk. ii., cap. 10.

† *Liber Landav*, p. 115.

‡ Haddan and Stubbs, *Councils*, p. 530.

"S. Beuno's body was coveted by three communities—Clynnog, Nevin, and Bardsey. The name *Ynys yr Arch*, in the parish of Clynnog, is supposed to preserve a record of a thrilling incident in the course of this memorable controversy. The legend ran that as the saint's body was being carried to burial, the procession halted at this spot, while a sharp contention arose about its ultimate destination. Such was the posture of affairs when the dispute was happily solved to everyone's satisfaction. The bearers, having fallen asleep, awoke to find three coffins resembling each other in every respect. Clynnog secured the true one."*

A similar event happened in connection with S. Teilo's body, and is referred to in the *Missa de S. Teilao.*

The famous *Croesnawdd*, cross of protection, which was said to contain a portion of our Lord's cross, and adorned with gold and precious stones, was always solemnly borne before the Welsh Prince as a palladium of national salvation. After Llewelyn's death

* *Celtic Britain and the Pilgrim Movement*, p. 34.

this precious relic was taken by Edward to Westminster, after which no trace of it can be found.

In the *Black Book of S. David's* (fourteenth century) we read that a certain class of tenants in time of war "are bound to follow the Lord Bishop with the shrine of the Blessed David, and with the *relics*"; and entries in the *Black Book* show the great veneration that was paid to the relics of S. David.*

One of the oldest of Welsh legal terms, *cynghrair—i.e.*, a covenant or agreement by oath—means an engagement over a relic (*crair*).

One passage from the Dimetian Code of the *Welsh Laws* is of exceptional interest as an illustration of the steady influence of the Church on the side of freedom and progress. It must be pointed out that there was, in the Welsh tribes, a class of serfs, or *villeins*, probably the descendants of the conquered Iberians. These men lived in separate hamlets on the borders of the tribal settlements.

* *Black Book of S. David's.* Introduction.

The word *Felindre*, a very common place-name in some parts of Wales even at the present day, is an instance of the survival of the old serf village (*villein—dref*).

The passage referred to deals with the class of persons whose privileges increase in one day, and among them is the *villein :*

"The first is where a church is consecrated in a serf village, a man of that village who might be a serf in the morning becomes on that night a *free* man."

A subsequent passage in the same Code of Dyfed gives it in a slightly different form:

"If a church be built within a serf village (*taeogtrev*), and there be a priest offering *Mass* in it, and it be a burying-place, such a *trev* is to be free thenceforward."

The Sacrament of Confirmation is referred to in the following passage from the Venedotian Code:

"At the end of seven years, he—the young tribesman—is to swear for his acts, for then he shall come under the hand of his confessor, and shall take duty to God upon himself."*

* Book ii., cap. 8.

The greatest literary and ecclesiastical figure in early Mediæval Wales is Giraldus Cambrensis—the "father of popular literature," as Green, the historian, calls him. He was a most voluminous writer, and, in spite of his prodigious vanity and failings as an historical critic, his works are of the greatest value for the light they throw on the religious condition of the country.

His writings, however, are so well known that we need not linger long over his testimony. Both in his *Welsh Itinerary* and *Description of Wales* he speaks very highly of the Catholic orthodoxy and devoutness of the Welsh people, though he is very candid and outspoken in his denunciation of some of the national failings. In A.D. 1188 he accompanied Archbishop Baldwin on his crusading tour through Wales, the outstanding feature of which was that the Archbishop celebrated Mass in each of the four Welsh cathedrals. His experience during this memorable tour enabled Gerald to see Wales and Welsh life and customs from the inside. In fact, his *Itinerary* may be justly considered

the first comprehensive account of the religious condition of the old Cymry.

Abbot John of Whitland (Tŷ Gwyn ar Daf) and Abbot Seisyllt of Strata Florida accompanied the archbishop and his party as guides and interpreters.

He speaks very highly of the religious faith and devotion of the Welsh people, and of their profound reverence for the Church and the priesthood.

He refers to many points of similarity as regards ecclesiastical customs between the Welsh and the Irish Church of that period—*e.g.*, the respect for croziers, torques, trumpets and books, and the use of saints' bells as relics.

"Nothing," he says, "contrary to the true Faith is to be found amongst the natives. It is said that some parts of the ancient doctrines are still retained. They give the first piece broken off from every loaf of bread to the poor; they sit down to dinner by three to a dish, in honour of the Trinity. With stretched-out arms and bowed head, they ask a blessing of every monk and priest, or of

any person wearing a religious habit. But they desire above all other nations the episcopal confirmation and chrism, by which the grace of the Spirit is given. They give a tenth of all their property, either when they marry or go on a pilgrimage, or when, by the counsel of the Church, they are persuaded to amend their lives. But of all pilgrimages they prefer that to Rome, where they pay the most fervent adoration to the Apostolic See.

"We observe that they show a greater respect than other nations to churches and ecclesiastical persons; to the relics of saints, bells, holy books, and the Cross, which they devoutly revere; and hence their churches enjoy more than common tranquillity."*

We know from the writings of contemporary bards and other sources that pilgrimages to Rome were immensely popular among the Welsh people.† In fact, on the occasion of Gerald's second visit to Rome to plead for the independence of S. David's, there were crowds of pilgrims from Wales

* *Descriptio Cambriae, I.*, 18.

† *Cf. Brut y Tywysogion*, pp. 12, 40, 44, 364.

in the Holy City—" multi peregrini de Wallia" —who came forward with patriotic eagerness, prepared to bear testimony in his favour.

The Welsh bards are our witnesses that Rome exercised an extraordinary fascination over the Welsh mind. A pilgrimage to Rome finds a place in the legend of every Cymric saint.

Cynddelw—a patriotic and distinguished Welsh bard—speaks enthusiastically of the sights of Rome:

> " Caer Ruvain, ryfedd olygawd!
> Caer uchav uchel ei defawd!"

The subject of pilgrimages, in its relation to Catholicism in mediæval Wales, is a very tempting one to treat at some length, for it gathers up and represents a mass of the most definite and interesting evidence of the Catholic beliefs and customs of the Welsh people in the Middle Ages.*

* In the ancient *Laws of Wales* a pilgrimage to Rome was a plea recognized by law. Among those

Although Rome was, naturally, the height of the Welsh pilgrim's ambition, the national shrines, such as Ynys Enlli (Bardsey), Strata Florida, S. Beuno's shrine at Clynnog, and S. David's, were in high repute, and satisfied the longing of those whose circumstances debarred them from all hope of setting their face towards the *ultima Thule* of the devout and penitent souls of Christendom.

Two visits to S. David's shrine were, according to an old Welsh saying, reckoned as the equivalent of one pilgrimage to Rome: "Roma semel quantum dat bis Menevia tantum."

Many Welsh pilgrims, however, went even to Jerusalem. The *Brut y Tywysogion* (*s.a.* 1145) says: "Great numbers of Welsh went on pilgrimage to Caer Salem" (*i.e.*, Jerusalem).

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against whom, according to law, no one is to be received or heard: a person who might chance to commit some act so as not to be able to obtain the communion of the Church of God, until he obtained absolution, from the Pope, after setting out upon his pilgrimage (*cf.* Dimetian Code, ii., 25, and Venedotian Code, Bk. x. cap. 17).

It is therefore no wonder that S. David's, as Bishop Barlow complained to Cromwell some centuries after Gerald's time, "hath been always esteemed a delicate daughter of Rome."

The subject of pilgrimages, however, in connection with the history of the Celtic Church, has been brilliantly treated by Dr. Hartwell Jones in the work from which we have already quoted some eloquent passages.

Those who are interested in, and desire to have accurate information on the subject of early Welsh Catholicism, should study very carefully the mass of evidence collected in this valuable work.

It is very interesting to note that even at the present day there still exists in North Wales a memorial of the spacious days of the pilgrim movement. A farm near the Eifl Mountain, in Carnarvonshire, enjoys the privilege of exemption from tithe—a reminiscence of the ancient obligation to entertain pilgrims to Bardsey, the *Insula*

Sanctorum, and the Rome of Wales, *free of charge.*

Apart from Gerald's general reference to the ecclesiastical instincts and spiritual devotion of the Welsh people in his *Itinerary* and his *Description of Wales*, his most instructive passages on the deeper aspects of the religion of the age are contained in his *Gemma Ecclesiastica.* Here he deals among other topics—theological, ecclesiastical, and disciplinary—with the institution of the Holy Eucharist, not in any pronounced controversial sense, but by way of giving instruction and guidance to the local clergy. We have therefore in this treatise a faithful picture of the religious beliefs and practices that prevailed in the diocese of S. David's in the twelfth century. The etymology of the word "Mass," the doctrine and ceremonial of the Mass, the doctrine of Transubstantiation, Confession, Penance, Extreme Unction, Baptism, the rule of the Church as to sponsors, and other allied topics, are

treated at great length in an expository manner.*

As Gerald did not know the Welsh language, his knowledge of the inner intellectual condition of the Welsh people was imperfect. The Welsh priests of S. David's were, no doubt, somewhat deficient in Latinity, and—from Gerald's point of view—lacking in the saving virtue of Norman grace; but his testimony, together with that of the Welsh bards of that age, gives us a very valuable picture of Welsh Catholicism in Norman times, and shows that the Welsh people of that age were simple, devout Catholics, like the Irish people of the present day.

He makes it quite clear that in the religious life of that age, the Eucharistic sacrifice was the central point from which all doctrine emanated, and to which all spiritual discipline referred.

He has many a pungent criticism on some of the shortcomings of the Welsh people, but never a word of complaint about their

* *Gemma Ecclesiastica*, caps. iv.–viii.

orthodoxy and loyalty to the Catholic Faith, and obedience to the See of Rome.

The oldest extant manuscript in the Welsh language is the *Black Book of Carmarthen* (twelfth century). In the chain of historical evidence, it may be described as the most important connecting-link between Giraldus Cambrensis and the *Injunctions* of Archbishop Peckham at the period of the Annexation.

It contains some early Welsh hymns and poems of great literary merit on various subjects—religious, historical, and allegorical —such as the "Avallenau" and "Hoianau." The whole work breathes the spirit of the purest Catholic devotion.

In one passage we have a reference to S. Peter and the power of the keys:

> I love to praise Peter,
> Who can bestow true peace,
> And with him, his far-reaching virtue.
> In every language he is acknowledged
> As the gentle high-famed
> Generous porter of Heaven.

A quaint reference to the Holy Eucharist is contained in the following lines:

"Mi aegowinneis y offereid bid
Ae hesgip ae higneid
Pa beth oreu rac eneid!
Pader a buyeid a bendiceid
Creto: ae canho rac enaid
Hid wraud goreu gortywneid.

"I asked secular priests,
Their bishops and judges,
What is the best thing for the soul!
The Paternoster and consecrated wafers
And a Holy Creed.
He who sings them for his soul
Until the Judgment
Will be accustomed to the best thing."*

We have already discussed the meaning of the word *buyeid* or *bwyaid*. Though its primary meaning is "consecrated wafers," it has a more specific liturgical meaning in early Welsh literature, and that is "the Mass." The proverb, "Ni chenir bwyaid ar ffo," is a clear confirmation of this; for the word *canu*, "to sing," can only be applied to the Mass, not to consecrated wafers.

The Welsh people in the Middle Ages were

* *Black Book of Carmarthen*, p. 84. The best edition is that by Dr. Gwenogfryn Evans; but the printed text may also be seen in Skene's *Four Ancient Books of Wales*, vol. ii., pp. 1–62.

accustomed to the use of rosaries—*paderau*, literally paternosters:

"Ry talud istedlit tri seith pader beunit."

"You should pay what is equal to three seven-paternosters daily."

The frequent use of the *pader* is constantly referred to in ancient Welsh writings. In *Meddygon Myddfai* ("The Physicians of Mydd-fai"), *e.g.*, a medical treatise of the twelfth century, the use of the *pader* is pressed into the service of medicine. For one particular ailment the patient was advised to take in the morning at sunrise a certain herbal concoction, "chanting thy paternoster the while." As a remedy for the ague, he was to collect plantain, "whilst saying thy paternoster." The physicians had even a medical remedy which would act as a charm to induce a hardened sinner "to make his confession."

The Rev. J. Fisher, in his *Private Devotions of the Welsh*, makes the following remark:

"One not infrequently finds *Sallwyr Fair*—*i.e.*, the Psalter of Mary—alluded to in mediæval Welsh, and I have my suspicions

that this may be really the *Rosary*, which was at one time called in English 'Lady Psalter,' from its originally consisting of the recitation of a certain number of Psalms, with prayers intercalated."*

In one passage in the *Black Book*, almsgiving is connected with confession as a test of penitence: "What gavest thou of thy wealth before private confession—kyn kyfes argel ?"

As in other Welsh writings of that period, the observance of the *Canonical Hours* is specially inculcated, and is as a rule closely connected with all references to the Holy Eucharist.

In *Ystorya de Carolo Magno, e.g.*, we read:

"Yn canu offerenau a phlygeiniau ac oryeu drosom."

"Singing Mass and Matins and Canonical Hours for us."

While the whole of the *Black Book of Carmarthen* is Catholic in its tone, some of the poems reflect their monastic origin.

Dr. Gwenogfryn Evans, the editor of the

* For reference to *Sallwyr Fair* see Welsh Hist. MSS. Report, pt. ii., 322, 361.

Black Book, speaks very highly of its testimony to the religious character and spiritual harmony of the age whose condition is reflected in its pages:

"When the *Black Book* was written, the Church was one. Apparently it had no 'theologians' to divide the energies and embitter the relations of men. Its priesthood laid stress on the worship of God, a clean life, Church observance and Church support."

"Ever the first word I say
When I rise at break of day;
The Cross of Christ I'll wear alway.
I will wear it seemly well;
'Tis to me no fabled spell."*

The following lines show what the Welsh people in the twelfth century believed and practised in matters of religion:

"Thou hast not sung a Paternoster,
Nor Prime nor Evensong.
Thou hast not reverenced relics,
Nor Altars nor Churches.
But by rising at dawn, waking at midnight,
And imploring the Saints,
Every Christian can obtain forgiveness."

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* *Black Book of Carmarthen.* Introduction, p. 15. Dr. J. Gwenogfryn Evans. Folio 82.

The *Black Book of Carmarthen* reveals the hopes and struggles of a strenuous, warlike, and withal a God-fearing age, in which men acted vigorously, felt intensely, and believed implicitly in the verities of the Catholic Faith. It deals with matters of real human interest, with the witchery of natural phenomena, with the moods of the seasons, as well as with the secret chambers of the soul, as illumined and disciplined by the Catholic Church.

It has for its background that mystic Celtic world of fact and fancy which reflected on the grey lineaments of the present, the glowing memory of a proud past, in which the cadences of love mingle with the clash of arms and the tramp of gallant chieftains—the shield, the sword, and the battle; and the sign of the Cross, the symbol of the national Faith, overshadowing them all.

We now come to the period of the Annexation, when the political independence of Wales ceased, as a result of the *Statutes of Rhuddlan*, A.D. 1284.

Archbishop Peckham's " visitation " of the four Welsh dioceses is a notable event in the ecclesiastical history of Wales.

The changes effected at the time of the annexation brought out the ecclesiastical situation very clearly. The confusion and animosities of this period, however, had their root, not in religious or ecclesiastical antipathies, but in political and racial. Since the time of Gerald there was generally some friction between the political, and to some extent the religious, leaders of Wales and the See of Canterbury, because Canterbury represented, to the Welshman, Saxon domination.

This controversy had nothing whatever to do with Welsh loyalty to Rome. In fact, appeals to Rome were more persistent and frequent than ever before.*

There is no more eloquent passage in Welsh literature than the convincing and dignified protest addressed by Llywelyn, the last of the native Princes, to His Holiness against the

* Testimonies to this from Welsh sources are too numerous to quote: for independent testimony, *cf. Flores Historiarum*, ii., 393.

action of the English Archbishop in ignoring the special claims of Wales—sending English Bishops to Wales who could neither preach nor hear confessions in Welsh.

With regard to Welsh loyalty and obedience to the Holy See, the following document, dated A.D. 1280, speaks for itself. It refers to Bishop Beck of S. David's, who made a formal protest against the Metropolitan claims of the Archbishop of Canterbury over S. David's. It shows that the protest and the attitude of Bishop Beck in no way involved or raised the question of obedience to Rome:

"I, Thomas, Bishop-elect of S. David's, and consecrated by the Venerable Father Archbishop of Canterbury and Primate of all England, profess and promise to render due and canonical obedience, reverence, and subjection in all things, *according to the decrees of the Roman Pontiffs*, to you, to the holy Metropolitan Church of Canterbury, and to your canonical successors in the said Church of Canterbury."*

* Haddan and Stubbs, *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents*, vol. i., pp. 540–567.

A highly instructive comment on the division of parties in Wales at this critical period of Welsh history is supplied by the *Red Book of S. Asaph*, preserved in one of the Peniarth MSS. It shows that some of the Bishops in Wales, being Englishmen, were not always very sympathetic towards the national cause. When the Bishop of S. Asaph, *e.g.*, complained to Pope Gregory X. about Llywelyn, the Welsh Prince, the Abbots of Strata Florida, Whitland, Strata Marcella, Cwm Hir, Cymmer, and Valle Crucis, promptly wrote to His Holiness, protesting against the Bishop's attempt to defame the character and impugn the spiritual loyalty of the valiant Prince. The Abbots were Welsh nationalists. It must, however, be remembered that these differences were due not to religious discord, but to racial antipathies.

Peckham's *Injunctions*, issued in A.D. 1284, deal very fully with the religious state of affairs in Wales. In his dealings with the Welsh people, we detect a good deal of English self-complacency in Peckham's conduct of affairs. Owing to the barrier of

language, the Archbishop was not favourably impressed with the culture of the Welsh. He therefore left instructions for the clergy of Wales to undertake some wholesome reforms in regard to "dress, impetuosity of speech, and proficiency in Latin."

These documents remind us of Archidiaconal charges. They deal almost entirely with purely disciplinary matters—the reorganization of the spiritual ministrations of the Church after the terrible ravages of the Wars of Independence.

He exhorts the clergy to observe the *Canonical Hours* as of yore. It may be of interest to the reader to know the Welsh names of the *Canonical Hours* of the Church: Pylgain, Dewaint, Anterth, Nawn, Echwydd, Gosper, Ucher.*

He also charges them to celebrate Mass with fitting reverence—*cum cantu.*

All the evidence of Welsh mediæval literature shows that the Holy Eucharist was celebrated *chorally.*

* It is important to note the high *antiquity* of the *Canonical Hours. Cf.* Life of S. David in *Cambro-British Saints,* § 20.

With regard to the Reservation of the Host, he writes:

"Corporis vero Dominici Sacramentum cum reverentia debita reservetur prout statutum est.

"Et reverenter cum tintinnabulo previo et accenso cereo vel candela ad aegrotos in cuppa vel decenti pyxide in manibus sacerdotalibus deportetur.

"Ipsa etiam ecclesia officietur celebritate condigna, tam in missa quam in horis canonicis omni die."*

With regard to the ritual carried out even in the remotest parts of Wales at this period, a composition made in A.D. 1252 between the Abbot of Bardsey and the secular Canons of Aberdaron throws a ray of light on the custom of the country.

It appears that the Abbot had given to the Canons of Aberdaron "sacerdotal vestments, a silver chalice, and engaged to give a pound of incense yearly on S. John the Baptist's Day."

There are other matters of very great

* Haddan and Stubbs, *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents*, vol. i., pp. 550–555.

interest to the student of Welsh history in these *Injunctions* of Archbishop Peckham, such as the fondness of some of the Welsh people for dabbling in occult philosophy; for the Archbishop refers in words of weighty warning to the devotees of dreams, auguries, and fantastic visions, who were to be severely rebuked and urged to forsake such vanities, and to glory rather in the Cross of Christ.*

Some of the Welsh tribal customs also came under his lash, but here, owing to his ignorance of the domestic affairs of the Welsh tribal system, the Archbishop is on less sure ground. Gerald, the Welshman, though far better acquainted with the habits and traditions of the Welsh people, made similar mistakes, and criticized the Welsh unjustly.

For better instruction in the doctrines of the Faith, the Archbishop urged both clergy and laity to avail themselves of the ministrations of the "Preaching Friars." In most books on Welsh ecclesiastical history, the "Preaching Friar" of old Wales is little more

* *Cf. Cambria Sacra*, cap. vii., Saints and Supernatural Events, pp. 220–260.

than a subject for ridicule, despite the fact that some of our most eminent mediæval bards, such as Tudur Aled, were friars themselves.

Perhaps the following tribute from Owen M. Edwards, in the *Story of the Nations* (Wales), will help to correct this unjust and false impression:

"Their high ideals, their self-sacrifice, their zeal for morality, their devotion to the cause of peace and justice, their championship of the weak, and their sympathy with suffering, had appealed to Llywelyn, as to many others. From pleasant Llanfaes, by the Menai, to the leper-haunted streets of Haverfordwest, the Friar passed through Wales on his exalted mission."

Before proceeding to more detailed subjects in relation to Catholicism in mediæval Wales, a brief reference may be made here to the wider subject of ancient Welsh liturgies.

We have already quoted the opinion of Dr. Hugh Williams on the paucity of British liturgical books to supply us with information

on this point, but the *Stowe Missal* and the *Antiphonary of Bangor* give us a very accurate idea of early Welsh Service-Books, the differences between the former and the latter being trifling.

A few liturgical fragments have survived from the eleventh century, but these have very little claim to be called Welsh in any special sense.*

One is the *Missa de Sancto David.* This is based on *lectiones* taken from Rhygyfarch's *Life of S. David,* and is probably from Norman times.

ORATIO.

Deus qui confessorem Tuum David atque Pontificem angelo nuntiante Patricio prophet ante triginta annos antequam nasceretur predixisti; quesumus ut cujus memoriam recolimus, ejus intercessione ad æterna gaudia perveniamus per sæcula sæculorum.

SECRETA.

Hostias laudis et preces devotionis quas tibi in honore beati confessoris tui David atque pontificis, Omnipotens Deus, deferimus, placatus intende: et quod nostrum non optinet meritum Tua clementia et illius pro nobis frequens intercessio efficiant.

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* *Cf.* Warren, *Liturgy and Ritual of the Celtic Church.*

POST COMMUNIONEM.

Replete, Domine, sacramenti participatione quesumus ut Sancti David confessoris Tui atque pontificis meritis, cujus gloriosam celebramus festivitatem ineffabilis misericordie Tue patrocinia sentiamus.

Another is a *Missa de S. Teilao.* This is written in a fifteenth-century hand on a vacant space in a manuscript Sarum Missal in the Cambridge University Library.

Also an *Oratio de Sancto Teilao,* written on a flyleaf at the end of the *Book of Llandav.*

Haddan and Stubbs* quote a *Sequence* (probably Welsh) of the tenth or eleventh century. The text is fragmentary and corrupt, but it contains a reference to the *Orientalis Regina.*

Another *Sequence* is quoted from Taliesin's *Elegy of the Thousand Sons.*† It begins:

"Qui venerunt angli . . .
In natali Dni.
Media nocte in laudem
Cum pastoribus in Bethlem."

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* *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents,* vol. i., pp. 620–624.

† Skene, *Four Ancient Books of Wales,* vol. ii., p. 113.

After S. David and S. Teilo, it is doubtful whether any native saint in the Calendar of the Welsh Church was more popular and more venerated than S. Winifred, the niece of S. Beuno.*

In Harleian MS. 955 there is preserved an Antiphon and Collect for S. Winifred's Day, "Oratio devota ad sanctam Wenefridam," and the following eulogy:

"Virgo decus virginum gentis Wallicorum
Sacra proles hominum consors angelorum
Wenefrida nimium fons origo morum
Duc post vitæ terminum nos ad Christi chorum."

The thirteenth-century *Bangor Pontifical* does not appear to differ, speaking generally, from the Sarum family of offices more than in small variations, not sufficient to constitute it a peculiar *Use*.

We have clear evidence of a good deal of Welsh liturgical remains in the religious poetry preserved in the *Myfyrian Archæology* and other collections, but we have no space to undertake a detailed examination of the subject.

* *Cf.* Welsh Hist. MSS. Report, vol. i., pt. ii., p. 357.

CHAPTER III

No aspect of early and mediæval Welsh religion is more noteworthy and characteristic than the place of honour assigned to the Blessed Virgin.

The following passage from *The Celtic Church and the Pilgrim Movement* expresses this very clearly:

"From early times Welsh writers show that the cult of the Blessed Virgin struck deep root in the Celtic mind, and the Reformation, in spite of its proscription of 'Mariolatry,' has not to this day succeeded in obliterating the traces of the cult. The poets, uniting in their persons the genealogist and the bard, delighted in weaving around the Virgin's name a wealth of imagery, which in many cases reached a devotional strain of thought unsurpassed by German Minnesinger or Provençal troubadour."

Anna herself participates in the honour. Her genealogy is dwelt on in minute detail. A good illustration of this may be seen in one of Iolo Goch's poems. The *Transitus Mariæ** was a favourite subject with Welsh theologians and poets:

"Angylion gwynion a gaid
Yth ddwyn dy gorff ath enaid."

"Bright angels were found to take thee away, body and soul."

Mary was the protectress of sailors, the *Stella Maris :*

"Koelfawr vyd kæ lef ar Fair
Morwyr pell a gymhellir
Mair au dwg or môr i dir."

LEWIS MORGANWG.

Another title attributed to her is "Mair Arglwyddes y moroedd"—"Mary, Queen of the Seas."

Nature is ransacked for poetic figures to express her honour, and page follows page of high panegyric and glowing simile.

"Ymhob ing ymhob angau
Mair oedd au help ym ryddhau."

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* *Cf.* Welsh Hist. MSS. Report, vol. i., pt. ii., pp. 311, 329, 334, 358. Also *Llyfr Ankyr*, p. 83.

In every trouble and in the face of death of every kind, Mary was their sure shield for deliverance.

The fear of death, according to the same bard, constrains men to appeal to Mary for intercession in the hour of dire distress.

> "Mair arched air airchiad oll,
> Mair am unair ym enaid,
> Mair wrthfawr wrth fy raid."

Similar quotations from late sixteenth-century poets illustrate the tenacity and deep-rooted character of this devotion to Our Lady in the Welsh mind.

Lewis Morganwg writes:

> "Mair o'th wyrth hyd môr a thir
> Yna i dauthost vendithfawr
> I'r lle hwn or nef ir llawr
> Dy ddelw bob dydd a welynt
> Yn vyw a gad o nef gynt
> Mawr yw rif mewn ysgryfen
> Mwy rif dy wrthau (*i.e., gwyrthiau*), Mair Wenn!
> Merch Anna, Wenn Mair ych nawdd!"

Howel Surdwal (A.D. 1430-1460), in a fine poem, speaks of

" The fair maiden, blessed from Heaven,
Mary the Virgin !
Thy image we adore.
God thy Son, good is thy burden.
On thy breast thou didst rear
The God of heaven, God the King !
When Mass is sung
I will go *with wax to the Pure Lady*.
Hail to the Queen of Heaven !"

Incidentally the poet mentions the Blessed Virgin's *Pylgain* and *Mass*.

Thomas ab Ieuan ab Rhys, another bard, declares that in the Day of Judgment " it will go hard with him, if Mary will not place her prayers (*paderau*) in the balance against his sins, and unless Masses are offered."

As the Immaculate Mother of our Lord, some of the Welsh bards connect her in a very intimate way with the virtue of the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

Many of the bards who sang the praises of *Arglwyddes Fair* were members of monastic houses; others were closely associated with the monastic orders, such as Tudur Aled, Guto'r Glyn, and Gutyn Owain.

But the language even of the non-monastic bards is as impassioned and sincere as that of

any monk or friar. It may be noted that one special reason why mediæval Welsh poetry is so full of religious matter, and so permeated with the Catholic spirit, is that the old Welsh *Eisteddfodau*, so characteristic of Welsh life, were often held within the precincts of monasteries or churches, when poems were composed for and on the occasion.

This was the institution, *par excellence*, through which literary culture was disseminated in mediæval Wales, and in Wales literature has never been divorced from religion.

As far back as Welsh literature carries us we have the most explicit and abundant testimony to the cult of the Blessed Virgin.

In *Buchedd Mair*, *e.g.*, the Immaculate Conception is stated unequivocally:

" Ni chavad arwydd pechawd na'i arlwybr arni."

" There was not found the mark of sin, nor its trace upon her."

There was no *llygredigaeth gwaed* (" corruption of blood ") in her.

She was, as Wordsworth, says " our tainted nature's solitary boast."

Dafydd Benfras describes the conception of our Lord in the Virgin's womb under the figure of the sun's rays shining through the window in summer.

Ieuan ab Rhydderch, in a passage preserved in the Iolo MSS., writes:

> "Mary is our trust against danger:
> Great privilege it is to obtain by her miracle
> The Holy Body of God in the pure Church,
> And His Blood from the Chalice."*

The word "miracle" in the above quotation deserves a passing notice. The frequent occurrence of the word *miragl* in the writings of the old Welsh bards shows clearly that it refers not to "miracle" in the scriptural sense, but to dramatic exhibitions, sacred dramas, or miracle plays. These plays were generally performed at the Christmas festivities. The "Mari Wen," "Ladi Wen," or "Mari Lwyd," of modern rural Wales are a survival of the old Welsh miracle plays.†

Again, a *cowydd duwiol* by Sion Cent,

* Iolo MSS., p. 358. *Cf.* also Welsh Hist. MSS. Report, vol. i., pt. ii., pp. 434, 486.

† *Cf* Stephens, *Literature of the Kymry*, pp. 70–80.

quoted in the *Cefn Coch MSS.* (p. 26), has the following petition:

" May God at length bring us all
To the Eternal country and to the Feast,
And may God there give us happiness with Mary."

In the hour of death her intercession was always earnestly besought:

" Most humbly will I call on God
And the Blessed Mary, before I die."*

A similar sentiment is expressed by Cynddelw in his *Ode to God:*

" Archaf danc cyn tranc
Trwy eiryolet Meir."

" I will ask for peace (*danc*) before I die,
Through the intercession of Mary."

She is sometimes—indeed, frequently—associated with S. Michael in these bardic petitions for intercession, but her name is always placed first.

Gwynfardd Brycheiniog, *e.g.* (1160-1200), approaches the Throne of Grace:

" Drwy eiryolet Meir
Mam radlonet
A Mihangel Mawr."

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* Sion Cent (1380-1420) in his *Cywydd i'r Drindod* (preserved in *Ceinion Llenyddiaeth Gymreig*).

"Through the intercession of Mary,
The Mother of mercy,
And great Michael."*

Elaeth, quoted in Skene's *Four Ancient Books* (vol. i., p. 503), pours forth his soul as follows:

"O God, I will ask another request,
That my soul, to be safe
From the torments of enemies
And held in remembrance,
May have the protection of the Virgin Mary
And the Holy Maidens!"

The holy maidens are the nuns, called in Welsh, "morwynion gwynion Mair."†

The bardic lore preserved in the *Myfyrian Archæology* is full of this spirit of intense devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and belief in the peculiar efficacy of her intercession:

"Caffwyf nef lle tangnefir
Drwy nerth gair y wyryf."

"May I obtain Heaven,
Where there will be peace
Through the power of the Word of the Virgin."‡

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* The usual formula is *Duw a Meir a Mihangel: Cf.* Welsh Hist. MSS. Report, vol. i., pt. ii., p. 416.

† Unair yw mair ai morwynion a lywodvaetha'r tir mewn gwirionedh (Welsh Hist. MSS. Report, vol. i., pt. ii., 584).

‡ Dafydd y Coet, in his *Ode to God.*

Again, in an *Awdl Sanctaidd* (Anon.):

> " Kymodlonedd
> Drwy ddiwair eiriawl
> Mair wyryf ganmawl."

In the eleventh century, Meilyr, the poet, calls Bardsey Island " Ynys Enlli " (" The Fair Island of *Mary* "), which he desires, in his pathetic ode on the " Death-Bed of the Bard," as his last resting-place:

> " A place that is solitary,
> By wayfarers untrodden;
> Around its graveyard heaves the bosom of the deep,
> The Fair Island of Mary,
> The Holy Isle of Saints."

Ynys Enlli, the Welsh name for Bardsey, does not mean, as is generally supposed, Ynys *yn y lli* (the Island in the Flood), but Ynys *B*enlli. In combination with Ynys, according to a law of the Welsh language, the *B* is elided. Benlli was a Welsh Prince of Powys, and is mentioned by Nennius in his *Historia Britonum* (cap. 32). As he is not represented by Nennius as a person in the odour of sanctity, it is not clear how a

holy island came to be named after such a ruffian. Meilyr, by the way, in the above-mentioned poem, calls himself a "pilgrim of Peter."

We have already observed that Nennius states that the valiant Arthur "bore the image of the holy Virgin, mother of God, upon his shield," and the writer adds that, "through the power of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Mary, he put the Saxons to flight."

In Geoffrey's *History of the Kings of Britain* this is amplified a little:

"Arthur's shield, called Priwen, upon which the picture of the Blessed Mary, Mother of God, was painted, in order that he might be reminded of her more frequently."

In rushing into the fray, says Geoffrey, Arthur used "to call on the name of the Blessed Virgin."*

Gwasanaeth Mair, or the *Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, translated into Welsh by Dafydd Ddu, Abbot of Neath, was a devotional work greatly in vogue in mediæval

* *Historia Regum Brit.*, x., 1–2.

Wales. In it we have Welsh hymns of the most profound devotion to Our Lady.

"In connection with this office," writes the Rev. J. Fisher, joint author of the *Lives of the British Saints*, "I might observe that in the study of mediæval Welsh literature nothing strikes one more forcibly than the firm hold that the *cultus* of the Blessed Virgin seems to have had upon the Welsh mind. The *cywyddau*, *odlau*, and incidental allusions to her, are very numerous, and show the greatest veneration. There are more churches and chapels dedicated in her name than in that of any other saint. Her six festivals were among the most popular festival days in mediæval Wales; and we have a further proof of the veneration in which she was held in the great number of plants that even still bear her name in Welsh."*

As few Welshmen are aware of the great number of plants and flowers called after the Blessed Virgin, the following list, which is only a selection, will probably interest them: clustog Fair; allwyddau Mair; ysgawen

* *Private Devotions of the Welsh People*, p. 30.

Fair; briallu Mair; celynen Mair; claes Mair; cribau Mair; chwys Mair; dagrau Mair; esgid Mair; menyg Mair; gwlyddyn Mair; helyg Mair; llaeth bron Mair; llys Mair; mantell Mair; meipen Mair; mintys Mair; mwyaren Mair; rhedyn Mair; rhos Mair; tafolen Mair; ysgallen Fair, and ysnoden Fair.*

It may be added, as a further illustration of the influence of religious ideas on Welsh terminology, that we have flowers bearing the name of S. Michael, S. Peter, S. Paul, as well as that of some of the native saints.

Perhaps the most striking lines in Welsh literature—striking by reason of their high antiquity—are those attributed to the sixth-century poet Aneurin.

It must be conceded that, though early in substance, the style of the poem as it has come down to us is mediæval, probably fourteenth-century:

> "Merch frenhinawl a aned
> A'n dug o'n dygn gaethiwed."
>
> "A Royal Lady was born
> Who has brought us
> Out of our sore captivity."

* *Cf.* H. Davies, *Welsh Botanology*, passim.

As an illustration of the importance of viewing and interpreting these early testimonies in Welsh literature from the standpoint of those who actually wrote them—*i.e.*, the Catholic point of view—it is instructive to notice that Stephens, in his *Literature of the Kymry*, suggests that these words refer to the birth of Gwenllian, daughter of Llywelyn the Great !*

The suggestion is based, in the first instance, on an assumption that the poem itself is not early, but mediæval. There is not sufficient ground for this assumption.

In the second place, the suggestion is too far-fetched.

It needs some courage to dispute the judgment of such an eminent Welsh authority as Stephens, but the argument against his view is quite conclusive.

If Gwenllian was the Royal Lady who was to "deliver us out of our sore captivity," what was to be the method of deliverance ? She could not, as a woman, ascend the Welsh throne, and could not, therefore, be of any

* *Liter. of the Kymry*, p. 188.

service whatsoever as a deliverer from the Saxon yoke. But the poet does not say that the Royal Lady would *in the future* deliver them from captivity, but that she *had* already done so. The word is not *dŵg* (future tense), but *dug* (past tense).

Had Stephens been better acquainted with the inner life of the Catholic Church, he would have grasped the import of the words without the least difficulty; for, occurring as they do in the *Verses of the Months* for September, they undoubtedly refer to *the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin* (September 8), just as in December the same poet writes:

> "For twelve days we may rejoice
> Because of the Birth
> Of the Destroyer of Satan."

These words refer, of course, to the *Nativity of our Lord*, just as the previous lines refer to the *Nativity of our Blessed Lady*.

Ieuan Brydydd Hir Hynaf, quoted by Gweirydd ab Rhys in his *History of Welsh Literature*, refers to

" Mair enwog Dywysoges
Y môr a'r tir . . .
Meddyges wyt, Fam Iesu !
Os iechyd genyt a gaf
Im henaid y dymunaf
Iesu fal Ei dewiswyf.

Here Our Lady is called

" The 'Renowned Queen of land and sea;'
Physician art thou, Mother of Jesus !"

The words " meddyges wyt, Fam Iesu," have been deliberately changed by one Welsh writer into " meddyg wyt, f'Arglwydd Iesu " (" Physician art Thou, my Lord Jesus "), in order, presumably, to obliterate the poet's clear testimony to the honour paid by our ancestors in Wales to the Blessed Virgin !*

Gruffudd ab Meredudd (thirteenth century) has left us several beautiful poems of devotion to " Mair ":

" Mam tangnefedd
A thrugaredd
Teml yr Mab rat
Neuadd gariad
Nawdd ac Eiryawl
Haul y Dwyrain."

* *Hanes Llenyddiaeth Gymreig*, pp. 215, 340.

"The mother of peace and mercy,
The temple of the gracious Son,
The hall of love, protection and intercession,
The Sun of the East."

The simple beauty of the language and the poet's genuine devotion to Our Lady make these Odes extremely valuable. They give us a true picture of Welsh forms of devotion and religious belief in the thirteenth century.*

Sion Cent, a fourteenth-century bard and a learned Welsh divine—perhaps one of the most learned men in mediæval Wales—refers to the Blessed Virgin as follows:

"Mair yw'n hyder an gweryd
Ei gwerin ir drugaredd
A forwyn a fu arail
I bridwerth i Baradwys."†

Here the poet declares that the Virgin Mary is our sure confidence for gaining mercy and securing our ransom to Paradise.

Sion Cent's words are particularly interesting, for in his later years he was somewhat

* *Myfyrian Archæology*, sub voce Gruffudd ab Meredudd.

† Welsh Historical MSS. Report, vol. ii., pt. ii., p. 660.

tinged with incipient Lollardism of a not very inspiring type.

He also appeals to

"Geli a Mair Wen!"

"God and the Holy Mary!"

Referring to the writings of Sion Cent, Gweirydd ab Rhys, in his *History of Welsh Literature*, pays ungrudging tribute to the Catholic character of the works of these mediæval bards:

"Nothing in the writings of our Welsh bards betrays more clearly extreme Papal doctrine than these poems, with their allusion to penance, the intercession of the Virgin Mary, the doctrine of Purgatory, and the virtue of the Sacrifice of the Mass."*

"Duw a Mair" is a phrase that runs like a vein through the length and breadth of mediæval Welsh literature.

"O gyfarch yn y gafell
Duw a Mair, a oedd dim gwell?"†

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* P. 280.

† Welsh Hist. MSS. Report, vol. i., pt. ii., p. 513; also Cefn Coch MSS., p. 10.

writes Dafydd ab Edmwnt (quoted in *Ceinion Llenyddiaeth Gymreig*).

Cafell means the chancel of a church, hence a "sanctuary."

Even a poet like Lewis Glyn Cothi, the famous bard of the Wars of the Roses, whose poems are mainly biographical, and do not deal directly with religious topics, adopts quite naturally the usual Catholic phraseology, "Duw a Mair" and "Mair a'i cadw," etc.

The Blessed Virgin had even a special Lent assigned to her in the British Church. *Grawys Mair*, or "Mary's Lent," was kept from August 1 to 15—*i.e.*, a fortnight before the Feast of the Assumption of the Holy Mother of God.

We have, in fact, other Lents in the ancient British Church: The Apostles' Lent (Ascension Day to Whit-Sunday) and Elias's Lent (from Martinmas to Christmas).*

Another illustration of the respect paid to the Blessed Virgin is to be found in the *Forms of Bequest* in vogue in the old Welsh monasteries.

* *Saith* Grawys y sydd (Peniarth MS., 51.)

In the Chronicle of the Abbey of Aberconway, *e.g.*, these legal documents contained the words: "In honore omnipotentis Dei et Beatæ Mariæ et omnium sanctorum: Deo et Beatæ Mariæ servituris."

Again: "Pro Dei amore et gloriosæ Virginis Mariæ."

The same *Form of Bequest* was in use in the Abbey of Strata Florida: "We have granted by this our present charter, *to God and the Blessed Mary*," etc.*

Not the least remarkable of the innumerable testimonies to the Blessed Virgin and her exalted rank is the following, from Dafydd Ddu o Hiraddug:

"Mae'r penfydd Dofydd *Dwyfawl*, gyda Thi,
"I'th urddoni, eneth urddeiniawl!"

"The *chief object of Faith*, Divine Ruler,
is with Thee,
To exalt thee, thou honoured Maiden!"†

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* Quoted from a charter appended to S. W. Williams' *Cistercian Abbey of Strata Florida.*

† For literary allusions to Gwyrthyeu Feir (Miracles of Mary), see Welsh Hist. MSS. Report, vol. i., pt. ii., p. 326; and to the *Five Joys of Mary*, vol. ii., pt. i., p. 255.

One more instance, from modern times, may be quoted of the tenacity of the Welshman's devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

A prayer once greatly in vogue among the Welsh people was called *Breuddwyd Mair* ("Mary's Dream"). It was well known in certain parts of Wales in the early years of the nineteenth century, and a similar form has been found among the peasants of Brittany.

A reward of special Divine blessing was promised to those who recited this prayer every night. It takes the form of a dialogue between the Virgin Mother and the Holy Child, with reference to the agony of His coming Passion.

It is too long for quotation, but the following lines give an idea of the nature of the prayer:

"A dros fynydd ac oer fynydd,
Gwelwn Mair a'i phen ar obenydd,
Yn tirio lle rhwng pob enaid ac Uffern."

"Over the mountain, the cold mountain,
We see Mary with her head on a pillow,
Digging a space between every soul and Hell."

The phrase "with her head on a pillow" probably means "with a halo around her head."

It would be difficult to conceive a more remarkable and a more vivid definition of the intercessory work of the Blessed Virgin than that expressed in the last line—

"Digging a space between every soul and Hell."

Many old people still living were in their childhood taught this prayer, which they used to repeat with the *Paternoster* and the *Credo*.*

Throughout the whole of the mediæval period the testimony of the Welsh bards and men of letters to Catholic beliefs, and especially to the Holy Eucharist and the honour paid to the Blessed Virgin, is strikingly full and explicit, as the *Myfyrian Archæology*, the Iolo MSS., and other Welsh Anthologies prove. We will take a few representative names.

* The various versions of "Mary's Dream" are given in an Appendix to Rev. J. Fisher's *Private Devotions of the Welsh*.

In his "Ode to God," Gruffudd ab yr ynad Coch, the Court bard of Llywelyn, the last native Prince of Wales (1260-1300), gives us quite a small corpus of Catholic teaching and practice.

No more eloquent and definite testimony to the Catholic customs of the age could be quoted from any bard or writer.

He speaks of the Blessed Virgin's intercessory work:

> "Un Mab Mair, modrydaf teyrnedd
> Mair Mam Grist, ergynnan rhianedd
> Dyddaw yr haul or dwyrain
> Dy Eiriawl er dy fawr drugaredd
> Ar dy Fab iolydd di yn nhrugaredd."

Next to the Blessed Virgin comes the intercession of S. Michael, and he appeals to "nawdd Mair a'i morwynion, archengylion," and Peter.

Penance is necessary to save us from the pains of Hell:

> "Gymryd penyd rhag poenau Uffern."

Fasting is necessary for all Christian men:

> "Gwae lwth o'i lithiaw yngwenerau."

Woe to the glutton who breaks his Friday fast:

> " Gwae fi ni chyrcho *ffair Offerenau*
> Dros y saith bechod—anglod anglau
> Saith weddi'r pader arfer oreu."

Woe to him who neglects the *Masses.*

For the seven mortal sins—the reproach of the insincere—the seven petitions of the *Paternoster* are the best remedy:

> " Seven kind endowments (sacraments);
> Seven splendours; seven blessed verses
> Before the pain of the Cross,
> Christ uttered with His lips.
> Let the five ages of the world consider
> That these verses *pardon.*"

He desires, as essential to his soul's health—

> " Cymmun a Chyffes
> A lles llyfrau
> Olew ac anghen
> A Chymmod am Rhen."

" Communion and Confession; the benefit of sacred books; Extreme Unction and reconciliation with my God."

In Stephen's *Literature of the Kymry* * the above lines are curiously mistranslated as follows:

* P. 220.

> "Communion and Confession,
> And the pleasure of books,
> And what is good and necessary,
> And fitting,
> And communion with the Lord."

Lles llyfrau does not mean "the pleasure of books," but the spiritual benefit derived from the Liturgy—the "sacred books" of Divine service.

Olew ac anghen means nothing so bald and colourless as "what is good and necessary," but *Extreme Unction.*

It is the recognized Welsh equivalent of "Extreme Unction," and is widely used in mediæval Welsh.

In *Brut y Tywysogion, e.g., sub anno* 1145, we read that "Sulien, son of Rhygyfarch, died after undergoing salutary penance . . . and taking the Communion of the Body of Christ and Extreme Unction (*olew ac anghen*)."

Another entry under the year A.D. 1136 refers to the death of Gruffudd ab Cynan, who "received the Communion of the Body of Christ and *olew ac anghen.*"*

Sometimes a poetic form of it occurs, such

* *Brut y Tywysogion*, pp. 150, 160, 168, 206.

as *olew nefolydd*, "heavenly oil"; or a descriptive form, *olew claiar :*

"Dod olew claiar rhag dadl y clorian."

"Give Extreme Unction against the controversy (or decision) of the scale, *i.e.*, the scale of judgment."

A twelfth-century poet, Gwynfardd Brycheiniog, has left us a long and valuable ode, full of historical matter, to the memory of S. David, the Patron Saint.

Two lines in particular are noteworthy:

"A garo Dewi ddiofreddawg
Cared Efferen."

"He who loves Dewi, the devoted servant of God, let him love the Mass"—

meaning that the best service to render Dewi Sant was to reverence the faith in which the saint lived and died. That faith is summed up in one comprehensive term—*Offeren.**

Casnodyn, a thirteenth-century poet, referring to the Pre-existence of our Lord, describes Him as—

"Mab kyn bot na Phab na ffyryf avrllat."

"A son who existed before there was Pope or Mass."

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* *Myfyrian Archæology*, p. 288.

The interest of this lies in the fact that the poet looks upon the "Supreme Pontiff" and the "Sacrifice of the Mass" as the two great realities and centres of unity in the Christian Faith; but the Son of God existed even before these.

He then proceeds to thank God for His spiritual gifts, who

"A beris llen ac Offeren ac offeiryat."

"Has given us Holy Writ, the Mass, and the Priesthood."

In their allusions to our Lord's Presence in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, some of the Welsh bards use a very striking expression.

Dafydd y Coed, *e.g.*, speaks of

"Mawr gwawr Fab Gwyry Fair *Crair Careglau*."

"The Son of the Virgin Mary, the *Crair* of the Chalices."

Casnodyn, again, whom we have just quoted, refers to

"Duw Mab Meir yw Kreir Cristnogyon."

"God the Son of Mary is the *Crair* of Christians."*

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* *Cf.* Welsh Hist. MSS. Report, vol. ii., pt. i., 16; and *Myfyrian Archæology*, s.v., Casnodyn.

Now, the primary meaning of *Crair* is a relic; but it has here a deeper significance, an outward visible sign or symbol of some underlying spiritual reality. Hence an object of the highest veneration, and, furthermore, a pledge of salvation. It is consequently used very frequently in connection with the Sacrament of the Altar to denote the *Real Presence.* In the above quotations it probably denotes the *Adoration of the Host.*

There is one instance, at least, in the *San Greal* (chap. lxxxviii.), where it is used to denote the Holy Grail, and this use of the word is quite consistent with its more specific application to the Real Presence. Iolo Goch, again, in his *Genealogy of Mary*, writes:

> " O Fair Wyryf, *grair, arf i Gred.*"
>
> " O Mary the Virgin, object of worship and weapon of defence to Christendom !"

And Gruffydd ab Maredudd writes:

> "Gwae fi, *lwysgrair* Mair."*

The corresponding significance of *caregl,*

* *Cf.* Sul y *Krairiau.* Welsh Hist. MSS. Report, vol. i., pt. ii.. p. 407.

chalice, is illustrated by the following line from Morys ab Hywel:

> "Yn y *Caregl* yn eglur
> Moeswn bawb, mae Iesu'r bur."
> "Jesus is *truly present* in the Chalice."

In passing, it is worthy of notice that to the old Cymry the Sacrifice of the Mass was a medicine both for body and soul:

"The sweet Mass," writes Iolo Goch, "is medicine to the soul and true blessing to the body as well."*

A trace of this belief in regard to the efficacy of the Mass for physical ailments may be found in the folk-lore relating to wells. Sir John Rhys, in his *Celtic Folk-lore, Welsh and Manx*,† refers to a well, the water of which gave forth its full healing virtue only when visited on a certain day, and during the time when the books were open in church—*i.e.*, when the priest was engaged in saying Mass.

* Iolo Goch (Ashton's Edition), p. 50. *Cf. Lay Folks' Mass Book*, pp. 366–8

† *Celtic Folklore*, vol. ii., p. 315.

CHAPTER IV

The prince of Welsh poets is Dafydd ab Gwilym. He wrote very little on religious topics, and he was not always on good terms with the monks. He was very much preoccupied with his love affairs, but what he did write is emphatic and sincere enough. Some Welsh writers, misunderstanding and exaggerating the significance of his attitude towards some of the monks, and his criticism of their weaknesses, have claimed Dafydd ab Gwilym as a sort of Protestant before his time.

This is a totally wrong estimate of Dafydd ab Gwilym's religious point of view. He was indisputably as true and as sincere a Catholic as any other Welsh mediæval bard, and it will probably surprise some Welsh students to be informed that Dafydd even took part in pilgrimages.

A few quotations from his poems will show what his creed was:

"Gwnaeth Iesu Ner o'i geraint
Swrn yn Ebystyl a Saint
Gwnaeth Bader ac Offeren
Gwnaeth oriau a llyfrau llên."

"Jesus made of His friends
Some Apostles and Saints.
"He gave us the Paternoster and the Mass,
The Canonical Hours and the sacred books."

In an "Ode of Thanksgiving for the Redemption of Human Nature" he thanks God for giving mankind Anna, the mother of the Blessed Virgin, and for the Blessed and Spotless Virgin Mary herself, for

"Dwyn Duw i ddifwyno Diawl."

"Giving *birth to God* to destroy the Devil!"

In his "Ode to the Spirit" he calls Christ *Mab yr Aberth*, the Son of Sacrifice.

His death-bed "Confession" is a pathetic piece of writing. Here he reveals the real convictions of his heart:

"I will confess to Thee, to Mary, and to the Saints of Heaven,"*

* *Cf.* Welsh Hist. MSS. Report, vol. i., pt. ii., 577:

Kredaf, naf o nefoedd,
A Mair ac nid Raid ini mwy.

and expresses sincere regret for having occasionally scoffed at priests and monks:

"Am sarhau meibion llên."

There is a good deal of indirect evidence in Dafydd ab Gwilym's poetry to the religious life of the times, and especially in regard to liturgical topics, in which, by the way, the Welsh bards were very well versed; and they all point to the pronounced Catholic character of fourteenth-century Wales.*

A contemporary of his, Dafydd Nanmor, a native of Bedd Gelert, gives a most glowing account of Catholic worship and the appointments of the Sanctuary, nearly every detail connected with the Sacrifice of the Mass being most carefully and graphically noted. Another typical instance of this is Elidir Sais's "Ode to Lent," a fine expression of Catholic devotion.

Very few mediæval bards have touched on religious subjects in a more intimate manner than Iolo Goch.

Iolo Goch, the great bard of Owen Glyn-

* *Barddoniaeth*, Dafydd ab Gwilym, pp. 120–130; 349–351.

dwr's time, is described by Lewis Dunn in his *Heraldic Visitations of Wales* as Master of Arts and " chiefest of poets."

" Iolo was the composer of the Valle Crucis hymns, and translator from Latin of various theological tracts (see Peniarth MS. 14)."

His poems on religious subjects include a long one " On the Mass "—*Offeren :*

" Oreu ffair yw'r *Offeren*
Iawn waith yw cyffesu'n wych
Offeren dan Nen i ni.
Air da iawn yw'r daioni
A gyrch drwy orhoff goffa.
Offeren daw i ben da."

Here he declares that attendance at Mass is the best assembly. Confession is the preparation for it. He who frequents the service of the Mass will come to a good end.

The following lines refer to the doctrine of Transubstantiation:

" Fe wnair o Offeren, Fair Fwyn
Moddus gorph I Mab addfwyn
O waith prelad ai Ladin
I waed bendigaid o win."

The text adopted here is that in Ashton's edition of Iolo Goch's works, and, though it

clearly leaves a good deal to be desired—Ashton being a better compiler than textual critic—the general sense is perfectly clear.

The reader will notice how precise and definite the poet is in his account of the mystery of the Mass. The True Body and Blood of Christ are there "through the ministry of the Priest (or Prelate) and his Latin."

With regard to the *Elevation of the Host*, he writes:

> "Pan y dywaid yr effeiriad i Bader
> Ynol dyrcha Korph y Ner."

"When the priest has said the prayer (of consecration), he elevates *the Body of God*."

In his "Ode to God and the World" he refers to

"Corph Crist; a Chyffes o fynwes Fair"; and "olew nefolydd."

"The Body of Christ; confession from the bosom of Mary"; and "Extreme Unction."*

"Cyffes o fynwes Fair" is not quite clear. The text is probably corrupt, but it evidently

* *Gweithiau*, Iolo Goch (Ashton). These quotations are cited from his Ode on *Offeren* and *Mair*, pp. 180–200.

refers to the intercession of Mary in connection with the sinner's confession.

Here, again, as we have already intimated, the Blessed Virgin is very intimately connected with the benefit of the Mass:

> " Llawer ar yr Offeren
> Rhinwedd myn Mair ddiwair Wen !"

The poet expresses the belief that through the power and intercession of the Virgin Mary man will inherit a goodly portion:

> " Kawn ran trwy nerth merch Ana
> Lliw dydd ymysg y llu da
> Ac am hyny gymhenair
> Gorau i mi garu Mair.

And, again, in trouble and in the face of death:

> " Iawn rhag ing in rhag angeu
> Ym mor rhudd enwi Mair Wen."

The poet's hopes of Heaven are centred in her:

> " Cawn wynfyd canu i Wen Fair
> Cawn Nef oll, canwn i Fair.
> Mair a wna mawr eiriol
> A honn ni ad hyny 'n ol
> Mair an tynn or mieri
> A gwedi hynn gyda hi."

Purgatory is referred to in the following lines:

"Pan el enayd dyn playdfawr
Pair dan wg ir *Purdan Mawr*."

With regard to the Welshman's belief in Purgatory, we have ample evidence in many old Welsh manuscripts that *Purdan Padrig*, Patrick's Purgatory, had a wide vogue in Wales in the Middle Ages.*

The seven sacraments are mentioned:

"Nid oes eithr y *saith weithred*
I ddyn a ymwreiddyn i Gred."

Also the seven mortal sins:

"Saith elyn i ddyn a ddaw
I ymdynnu am danaw."

The mention of S. Peter's office leaves us in no doubt as to the poet's creed:

"Prydu a wnaf mwyaf mawl
I Bedr ddoeth wybodawl
Penn Porthor eiddun addef."

"Peter, wise and knowing, the Head Porter of the pleasant mansion."

Iolo Goch's poems are a perfect storehouse of testimonies to the Catholicism of the times of Owen Glyndwr—himself a loyal and faithful son of the Catholic Church.

* *Cf.* Welsh Hist. MSS. Report, vol. i., pt. ii., p. 306, and vol. ii., pt. i., pp. 322, 332.

In his *Manual of Welsh Literature*, the Rev. J. C. Morrice writes of Iolo Goch that some of his poems "deal with religious topics, and his views are Scriptural, but do not identify him with any doctrine peculiarly Roman. This lends colour to the suggestion that Lollardism had begun to influence the upper classes in Wales at this time."

We are not now concerned with the influence of Lollardism in Wales—it was slight in any case, and practically confined to the Border counties*—but as to the peculiarly "Roman" character of Iolo Goch's beliefs, as revealed in his writings, the quotations already given are a sufficient and a conclusive answer. To throw doubt on the Catholic character of Iolo's religious poems is merely to challenge the intelligence of the reader. Even Ashton, Iolo's latest editor, himself an irreproachable Protestant, admits, as any unbiassed reader is bound to admit, that Iolo was a "Papist" of the deepest dye.

In these unbalanced and extreme judgments

* *Cf. Lollardy and the Reformation in England* (James Gairdner), vol. i., pp. 68–88.

on our Welsh records there lurks a serious danger to the cause they are intended to serve. They remind us of the satirical description of the fate of the ultra-Puritan:

> " They ran sae far to get frae Rome
> That they ran oot o' Christendom !"

It is worthy of note that Iolo Goch's *Cyffes*, which is in the form of a prayer, is practically based on passages from the Roman *Missal*, which he quotes here and there almost *verbatim*.

The same feature is noticeable in the *Confession* of other bards, such as Gruffudd Gryg, Dafydd y Coet, and Dafydd ab Gwilym.*

This shows that the religious thoughts of the bards *were modelled on the devotional forms of the Church ;* and it shows, further, that as the bards thus drew inspiration from a common source, they cannot be charged with plagiarism—a charge sometimes brought against them by those who have overlooked this point.

* See *Myfyrian Archæology* under the name of each bard.

To return to our subject. In connection with the Holy Eucharist, the word *Afrlladen* is often used as equivalent to *Offeren*. Literally, it means "wafer-bread," but the deeper connotation of the term may be gathered from a phrase in the *History of the Crucifixion* (Peniarth MS., 14).*

> "Sef yw rad yr *Afrlladen*
> Pan ddyrchefir Duw gwir ddyn."
> "The virtue of the consecrated wafer
> When God True Man is elevated."

Again:

> "O'r Gwin a'r afyrllat y gwelwn
> Duw ene Lun *E Hunan*."
>
> "From the wine and the wafer bread, we
> See God *in the express Image of His Person*."

In a mediæval tract, quoted in the *Welsh Historical Manuscripts Report*, a passage dealing with the doctrine of Transubstantiation ends with the following quaint sentence:

"Anyone can give a slice of bread instead of meat, but God alone can give His flesh to eat and yet continue Himself to live."

* Welsh Hist. MSS. Report, vol. i , pt. ii., p. 330.

In the same tract the writer warns his readers:

"Gwae a ddifa glos eglwysau
Gwae ni chyrcho ffair offerene."

"Woe to him who destroys the cloisters,
Woe to him who does not attend Mass."*

Howel Surdwal (1430-1460), whom we have already quoted, says in a devotional poem:

"Mae'r Mab rhad yn yr Aberth."

"The gracious Son is present in the sacrifice."

A similar phrase is used by Ieuan Deulwyn in his ode, *Genedigaeth Crist :*

"Y gwr a gaiff gyru gwin
Yn lle i waed yn y Lladin.
Mae'r Mab Rhad yn arlladen
Mal y bu ymru Mair Wenn."

These words refer to the changing of the wine into blood through the Latin words of consecration, and "the Presence of the Gracious Son in the wafer, just as He was in the womb of Holy Mary."

It would be difficult to quote a more striking and explicit statement of the doctrine of Transubstantiation.

* *Cf.* Welsh Hist. MSS. Report, vol. ii., pt. i., p. 322 (Havod MS. 19.)

In regard to our Lord's Nativity, he writes :

"Ganed Duw o gnawd dyn."

"God was born of man's flesh." *

We will now glance very briefly at the evidence of some well-known Welsh mediæval tracts and books of devotion.

There are in the *Book of the Anchorite*, Llanddewi Brevi, A.D. 1346, several tracts of a religious character: "The Creed of S. Athanasius"; "The Way that Man should believe in God"; "The Virtues of hearing Mass"; "Keeping Sunday Holy"; "The Trinity in Unity"; and others.†

In the tract, "How a Man should believe in God," the author gives a practical account of the religious duties incumbent upon Christian men:

They must love God and keep His commandments; they must keep free from mortal sin; they must believe in the seven sacraments, and perform the seven works of mercy, for which Heaven will reward them.

* *Cf.* Ieuan Deulwyn, *Bangor Welsh MSS. Society.*

† A convenient book for these references is *Buched Dewi and other Mediæval tracts*, edited by Prof. J. Morris Jones.

Men's sins are remitted through the sacraments of the Church. To take food before Mass on Sunday and Days of Obligation is a grievous sin.

The term for breaking one's fast is "cymryd bwyd amryd"—*amryd = ammhryd.*

In order to heal the soul of the seven mortal sins, God gave to His Church the seven sacraments (*rhinweddeu*).

The Sacrifice of the Mass is called *Segyrffyg.* In the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar Christ is present—body, soul, and Divinity—as He is in heaven.

Penance is a punishment for sin, imposed by the priest.

Penance may take the following forms: fasting, pilgrimages to the shrines of saints, and meritorious works.

By Extreme Unction—*olew cyssegredig*—all mortal sins are remitted.

To administer Extreme Unction is called *anghenu.* "Adyn a dylyir y anghennu y gynifer gweith y dygwyddo ymywn cleuyt periglus."

Even in Reformation times the word

anghenu is used as equivalent to *enneinio*, or "anoint." Both William Salisbury and Bishop Richard Davies use it in this sense, in their Welsh translation of the New Testament.

In the tract entitled "Rinweddeu Gwaranndaw Offeren" ("The Virtues of hearing Mass") we are given a list of the benefits received by the faithful for attendance at Holy Mass.

One is, "The greater the length of life, the oftener one goes to hear Mass."*

Attendance at Mass brings forgiveness for *cymryd bwyd amryd*—neglecting fast days. Furthermore, the time spent in hearing Mass means a corresponding relief from the pains of Purgatory.

"*The Virtues of seeing Christ's Body.*"—Here, again, emphasis is laid on the forgiveness obtained through attendance at Mass for neglecting fasting:

"Sudden death will not come upon you that day, but if you should happen to die

* *Cf.* Nid rwystrach y ffordd er gwrando ryfferen (Havod MSS. 22, 335).

on that day, the privilege of a communicant —*breint kymunawl*—will rest upon you; because on that day you have received the Bread of the Mass"; and "no evil spirit will dwell with you while attending Sunday Mass."

The phrase "seeing Christ's Body" shows the importance that was attached to a sight of the Elevated Host. In many early Welsh manuscripts the hearing of Mass is often referred to as "seeing God."*

"There was a popular belief that if one missed Mass, or 'seeing God,' on Sunday, he ought not to smile until the Sunday following. Joyousness was certainly associated with the Mass in the popular mind."†

"Breuddwyd Pawl Ebostol" ("The Dream of Paul the Apostle") appears to be a warning to unbelievers and sinners. It contains a gruesome description of the pains of hell, and an account of the sins that had brought the guilty to the place of torture.

* For virtues gained by him who "sees the Body of Christ," a welo Koryff Crist pan ganer yfferen. *Cf.* Welsh Hist. MSS. Report, vol. i., pt. ii., p. 434.

† *Notes and Queries*, ix. 10-14.

Among the tortured were those who had not received Baptism in the name of God, had not paid tithes to the churches, and had not received the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ.

The tract on "Cadw Dyw Sul" ("Keeping Sunday Holy") gives practical instruction on the subject of Sunday observance. The priests were to instruct the people in these doctrines, "in order that they might be deemed worthy of heavenly mercy, for God Himself sent this written warning to sinners, even to the altar of the Church of Peter and Paul in Rome."

The *Officium Beatæ Mariæ—Gwasanaeth Mair*—printed in the *Myfyrian Archæology*, does not call for a lengthy notice, for its contents are sufficiently well known, but its "Hymns of Devotion to the Virgin Mary" are very noteworthy.

The following verse is typical:

"Mair wyryf ddisglair ddiwair
Wawr foreddydd
Hanpych well, ddiell ddien fam Ddofydd!
Gwna fi, Fam Geli o guliau yn rhydd!"

Another line expresses the Welshman's belief that the Blessed Virgin "undid the evil work of Eve."*

The *Officium Beatæ Mariæ*, or *Gwasanaeth Mair*, was probably translated into Welsh by Dafydd Ddu, monk, or perhaps Abbot, of Neath. The Welsh translation is certainly in the Glamorgan dialect.

Confirmation of this may be gleaned from the fact that in the fifteenth century the Neath Abbey library contained a famous Welsh book which was called the *Greal*.

This was not, as is sometimes assumed by Welsh writers, the famous *Book of the Grail*, but a *Collection* of "offices" or "prayers."

"There is extant a Welsh poem by Ieuan Ddu y Bilwg, beseeching the loan of the manuscript from Abbot Lewis," on behalf of some monastery.

The poet avers that if he shall obtain the *Greal* by Lent,

"Its proud leaves will be worth their weight in gold,"

and the Abbey choir shall celebrate its arrival:

* *Cf.* Auc dec rac eua dwyll (*Red Book of Hergest*, 1329)

"We shall have Matins in the Choir;
And after Vespers manifold will be
The uttering of praise to Mary."

The Neath Abbey *Greal* was the *Gwasanaeth Mair.*

A well-known Catholic primer of instruction and devotion in Welsh is *Athravaeth Gristnogawl,* by Morys Clynog, first Rector of the English College at Rome, and edited by Canon Griffith Roberts, of Milan, a patriotic Welshman, and an exile from his native land by reason of his loyalty to the old Faith.*

This primer was published in A.D. 1568. The editor, in his Introduction, expresses the pleasure it gave him to see so precious a treasure in the Welsh language. "I hope," he says, "when it comes into the hands of the religious people of Wales, it will benefit them greatly."

He refers, among other things, to the scarcity of books in Welsh on religious sub-

* The references to the *Athravaeth,* as well as to the *Drych Cristionogol* and *Allwydd Paradwys* later on, are from the copies of these works in the British Museum.

jects, and consequently has great pleasure in recommending the *Athravaeth* to be used by the faithful *ar osteg ypheren*, during the Prelude to the Mass.

It contains in simple idiomatic Welsh an excellent summary of Catholic doctrine. In plain but vigorous language it gives instruction on the veneration due to the Blessed Virgin; the invocation of saints; the Commandments of the Church, the first of which is *gwrandoy pheren*—hearing Mass. Fasting, confession, penance, prayers for the departed, the seven mortal sins, and the seven sacraments of the Church, are all explained in simple language suitable for the popular need. The priest is called *tad-enaid*, the "soul-father," a common term in Mediæval Welsh for a father confessor.

A hymn of praise at the beginning of the primer ends:

"Yn enw Duw y Tad
A'r unig Mab mad
A'r Yspryd Glân rad
Rod odidog
Iesu a Mair."

Then follows the *Ave Maria*, and an answer

to a possible question: whether, seeing there are so many statues of *Arglwyddes Fair*, there is more than one *Arglwyddes ?*

The saints are invoked as "the beloved of God," "the temple of the Holy Spirit," and "mediators for us."

The first rule of the Church is to hear Mass on the Days of Obligation, to fast in Lent, without eating meat on Friday and Saturday.

After dealing with the seven mortal sins and giving practical instruction on the subject, he proceeds to discuss and explain the "Seven Sacraments of Holy Church." He calls the Mass *Sagrafen yr Allawr*, and Confession is *Sagrafen Gyphes.*

The Christian is under the most solemn obligation to "gwnenthur y Penyd a roes tad enaid arnaf"—"to carry out the penance imposed by the father-confessor."

The Sacrifice of the Mass is explained in the following catechism:

Question : What is there in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar ?

Answer : Jesus Christ our Lord, body and soul, who is present in the wafer-bread

(*aferlladen*) as well as in the chalice (*caregl*), after the consecration by the Priest, just as He is in heaven.

Question : Does the bread remain in the *aferlladen* and the wine in the *caregl* after consecration ?

Answer : No; the bread turns into the Body and the wine into the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is what is done in the *offeren.*

Question : What is the Mass ?

Answer : The Mass is a memorial and a true representation of the life, passion, and death of our Lord Jesus Christ; and together with that it is a sacrifice by offering the same Christ for the living and the dead.*

Similar exposition of the sacramental teaching of the Christian Church is contained in *Symlen yr Apostolion,* which is appended to the *Welsh Grammar* of Dr. Gruffudd Roberts: *Symlen* is merely a Welsh adaptation of the word *Symbolum.*

" The third sacrament is the virtue of the altar called the *Eucharistia ;* and this nourishes

* *Athravaeth,* pp. 24–40.

man with the Body of Christ and His true blessed Blood, so that he is enabled to continue in the service of Christ without ceasing."

An *englyn*, as orthodox as it is artistic, emphasizes the same sacramental truth:

> " Dan santaidd beraidd ffurf, y bara gwiw
> Ar gwin cyssegreiddia
> Mae Corph gwaed rhad na wada
> Duw Iesu deg, dewis da,"

which means, in brief, that under the species of bread and wine, " the Body and Blood of our God Jesus are present."*

Dr. Gruffudd Roberts' first literary work is entitled *Y Drych Cristionogol* (*The Christian Mirror*). This was published by Dr. Rosier Smith. In a passage on the Sacrament of the Altar he says:

" When you receive the communion of the Body of your Lord, you can meditate in this wise: here all the purity and goodness of the world enter into all the vileness and evil of the world; a poor weakling receiving God: dust and ashes containing the Creator of heaven and earth."

* *Symlen yr Apostolion*, p. 8.

He very quaintly describes the virtues and the Sacraments of the Church as "spoons from which you eat and drink the great medicine that issues from the Side of Christ on the Cross. In each of these Sacraments we receive a portion of the precious ointment."

With regard to the Blessed Virgin, the author declares that "our Lady, the Virgin Mary, is in a rank by herself; for as she is the Mother of God and Queen of Heaven, she is in a higher seat than all the saints and the order of angels."

Plain and definite instruction is given on the doctrine of Transubstantiation, the adoration of the Host, auricular confession, penance, and fasting.

"In the Holy Eucharist," he says, "*Christ is present* with us, as He is in heaven." *

Dr. Rosier Smith, a native of S. Asaph, published a book entitled, *Sum ne Grynodeb o adysc Gristionogawl.* This was a Welsh translation of a Latin primer, called *Opus*

* *Drych Crist*, pp. 50–55.

Catechisticum (D. Petri Canisii: ex Societate Iesu). In the section dealing with "The Virtue or Sacrament of the Altar, known as the Eucharist," we read as follows:

"What is there principally in this Sacrament?" The answer is:

"There are three things in the Sacrament of the Altar.

"The visible form of the true Body and Blood of the Lord, and the power of spiritual grace.

"For what we see with our eyes are visible forms—that is, bread and wine.

"But what we perceive mystically (*yn ddirgel*) under these same forms by faith, and not by natural sense, is the True Body and Blood of Christ our Saviour."

Truths to know concerning the virtue of the Holy Eucharist are:

1. The truth of the Sacrament of the Altar.

2. The change of the substance and nature of the bread and wine, called in Latin *transubstantiatio.*

3. Adoration.

"In this Sacrament," he adds, "the True Flesh and Body of Jesus Christ and His True Blood are given to us under the species of bread and wine, through the ministry of the priest."

"The same Christ is present for us in the *Opherth*, not in a mortal, but in an immortal form."

There are further references to "Transubstantiation" and the "Adoration of the Host" (p. 114).

Penance is defined as "a Sacrament of the Church in which there is given unto us forgiveness and remission of sins by the priest."

A very full and valuable Welsh primer of instruction and devotion, representing the religious customs of mediæval Wales, is *Allwydd Paradwys* (the Key of Paradise).

Of course, we are now in the heart of the Reformation period, and the problems and anxieties of the age of transition are in some degree reflected in the tone of the book, for it is in parts mildly controversial, as though

the author were anxious to put his readers on their guard against the contagion of false doctrines.

It bears the date of A.D. 1670, which shows that the tide of Catholicism in Wales was not even yet entirely on the ebb. It is a work of special interest to the inhabitants of South-East Wales, for it is dedicated to "Fy anwyl frodyr am chwiorydd am ceraint ereill yn Gwent a Brecheinioc."

After a *Calendar*, we have a miscellany of "prayers, devotions, counsels, and most godly doctrines."

"The Holy Mass," it says, "is not a sermon or a doctrine, but the great sacrifice of the Christian religion. It contains a great number of mystic forms, signs, rites, acts, and sacred ceremonies, as well as words. In the Mass, *e.g.*, the priest makes the 'sign of the Cross' on himself and on everything and everybody present."

A long and elaborate exposition follows on the Sacrifice of the Mass, its meaning, rationale, ceremonies, etc.

When present at Holy Mass, the worshipper is taught to prepare himself as follows: Let him resolve in his heart to grieve sincerely for his greatest sins; let him furthermore offer these sacred mysteries for the Universal Church, for His Holiness the Pope, and for the whole body of the faithful.

Then follow prayers during Mass for the faithful departed, prayers to be offered at the elevation of the Host, and at the elevation of the *Caregl :*

" O Blessed Feast, in which *Christ Himself* is received, in which there is renewed a memorial of His Passion, and an earnest sign is given to us of the glory that shall be."

After some Litanies there follow divers prayers for the mediation of our " Blessed Lady, Mary the Virgin, Mother of God," who is addressed as:—

" Mam Wen ein Prynwr, yr hon wyt borth i'r nef."

" Blessed mother of our Redeemer, who art the gate to Heaven."

Then follows the "Litany of our Blessed Lady, Mary," and prayers for different days throughout the year.

The Commandments of the Church are summarized as follows:

1. To hear Mass on Sunday and Days of Obligation.

2. To fast during Lent and Ember-days, to abstain from meat on Saturday and other appointed days.

3. Confession.

Very full and careful instructions are given on the duty of spiritual preparation for the worthy reception of the Blessed Sacrament.

The following beautiful hymn of praise to the Blessed Virgin in *Allwydd Paradwys* shows that even in Reformation times the Welshman's belief in the efficacy of the Virgin's work of intercession, and her exalted rank, had lost none of its ancient power:

"Hanffych well. Seren y Môr.
Mam ein Harglwydd Dduw!
Morwyn Lân bob amser
Porth Nef ddedwydd loyw!

Dattod rwym yr euog
Rho i'r dall oleuni
Gyrr ymaith ein holl ddrwg
Cais in' bob daioni.

Dangos dy fod yn Fam
Cymred ein gweddi ni.
Trwot 'rhwn fu gwiw
Gantho fod Fab i ti !" *

Allwydd Paradwys deserves to be rescued from its present obscurity, and published as a Welsh primer of Catholic devotion.

The demand for Welsh Catholic books of devotion must have been very keen in the early years of the seventeenth century, for, in addition to the *Allwydd Paradwys*, the *Athravaeth Gristionogawl*, and others already mentioned, there is one entitled *Eglurhad Helaethlawn o'r Athrawaeth Gristnogawl*, or *Bellarmin's Athrawaeth Gristnogawl*, "translated from Italian to Welsh through the industry and constant help of the worthy nobleman V. R." It is dated A.D. 1618, but does not state where it was printed.

It follows the lines of the *Athravaeth* pub-

* *Allwydd Paradwys*, pp. 40–50, 179–193.

lished by Canon Gruffudd Roberts, of Milan, and the Welsh is good and idiomatic.

Confirmation is called *chrysm*, or *Bedydd Esgob*.

In the section which deals with the Sacrifice of the Mass, we read:

"Er cyflymed ag y darpho ir offeiriad dhywedyd y geiriau cyssegredigawl, mae'n rhith yr aferlhaden hono wir Gorph ein Harglwydd."

"As soon as the priest has uttered the words of consecration, the True Body of our Lord is present in the form (*rhith*) of the consecrated wafer."

It refers, as some of the other devotional books do not, to the mixing of the water with the wine.

And as in the *aferlladen*, so in the *caregl*, after consecration we have with "the Blood, the Body, Soul, and Divinity of the same Christ."

We must now bring to a close our survey of Welsh Catholic books of devotion. They leave us in no doubt as to the character of the religious convictions of the Welsh people at the time of the Reformation, and for a considerable period after that great upheaval.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

We have now gone beyond the orthodox boundary of the mediæval period, and, strictly speaking, have passed the chronological limit of our subject; but as we can fairly claim that certain aspects of the evidence of Catholic survivals in Wales in the period following the Reformation may be said to reflect the conditions and traditions of mediæval Wales, it will certainly not be out of place to glance very briefly at the evidence we possess of the heroic efforts made by the patriotic leaders of the Welsh people to retain the ancestral faith among the hills and valleys of our native land.

The Welsh people struggled hard and struggled long against the rising tide of Puritanism.

It began with the spread of the Lollard

movement. It was, however, but a small beginning so far.

Even towards the end of the fifteenth century some of the Welsh bards were beginning to view with some uneasiness the trend of religious affairs. The country was still suffering, materially and morally, from the devastating effects of the sanguinary revolt against English oppression, under the leadership of that gallant patriot, Owen Glyndwr. Owen himself was a staunch Catholic, and had even in the midst of his struggles for Welsh independence large and noble schemes for his country's welfare, including the official recognition of the Welsh language, and a Catholic University for Wales. His intimate relations with the See of Rome throw a good deal of light on the plans he had formed for the rehabilitation of his country.

All the relevant documents in connection with Owen Glyndwr's policy are preserved in *Welsh Records in Paris.** What the precise circumstances were does not appear, but an entry in the Lateran Registers informs us

* See p. 127, etc.

that the Pope granted a "plenary remission" to Owen and his wife in A.D. 1397.

The Wars of the Roses aggravated the general distress. Thousands of Welsh soldiers of fortune had returned from the battle-fields of France, and by their aimless and unsettled habits added to the general demoralization of the afflicted country.

Religious indifference and a spirit of restlessness were probably, even more than Lollardism, the potent cause of the religious depression lamented by the bards at this period.

A few selected quotations must suffice to show what were the feelings of those who were concerned about the religious state of the country.

The language is no doubt a trifle exaggerated, but this is how Gwerfyl Mechain (1460-1490), in an "Ode to Jesus," voices the rising feeling of alarm:

> "There will be in the Choir no Altar, no Wine;
> We shall have no Sacrifice of the Mass:
> No consecrated wafer from any priest."

The writer complains of the studied neglect of the Sacrament of the Altar:

"Dwyn caregl Iesu o'r Eglwysi."
"Taking away the Chalice of Jesus from the Churches,"

and concludes with an earnest desire for the privilege of sacramental communion with the *Duw Gwyn :* for Absolution—*cael fy enaid yn rhydd ;* for Extreme Unction—*olew ;* and refers in a striking phrase to the rites of Holy Church—*arfau Duw*, the weapons of God.

Here is another poet's lament, from an unpublished manuscript, quoted in *Celtic Britain and the Pilgrim Movement.*, p. 564.

The author complains that they were—

"Without Psalter (or Rosary):
No laying out of the dead:
No censing, no passing bell (*clul*):
No Confession, no benefit (*i.e.*, of absolution):
No almsgiving, no Mass-penny:
No difference between the words of a layman
And those of priests (*gwŷr llên*):
No ashes, no Image, no worship:
No Cross, no Lent, no Oil.
No True Sacrifice, blessed gift!
No Faith, no religion, no Christ:
No Church, no prayer:
No benefit (*i.e.*, sacraments) in the Church."

Many years later, in the very heart of the Puritan régime, a Welsh poet, looking back

from the Cromwellian period on the ancient Faith of the Cymry, expressed the secret hopes of thousands of his countrymen in the pathetic lines, "Ni a gawn ein byd yn wyn" ("We shall have our world happy again." The following is a short summary:

"When the Church was revered
And the Altar in the Côr,
When Confession was made to a priest,
God's forgiveness through Penance
Made the world bright.

"When we invoked the blessed saints,
When we had faith in Blessed Mary,
And showed great reverence for
The *Crair* [Adoration of the Host],
Our world was happy.

"*The Old Faith will come back again,*
And bishops will elevate the Host
When the Holy Catholic Faith is here
And the priest in his vestments."

"When we hear the music of the Mass,
And the Church again in her privilege,
Then through the blessed Communion of Saints
Our world will be happy again." *

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* *Cf.* Welsh Hist. MSS. Report (vol. i., pt. ii., 962), for a good example of the kind of *British History* written at this period. "The writer, says the editor, is evidently a fervid Roman Catholic; he is also a bard."

To men such as these—and Wales was full of them—living in the gloom of a dour and bigoted Puritan régime, "the glory and the loveliness had passed away from earth." This lament, so genuine and unaffected, over the departed glory of Catholic Wales gives one a good idea of the Welshman's devotion to the Faith of his fathers under the iron rule of Cromwellian Puritanism; and in view of such testimony, wrung from the heart of men who felt they had lost all that made life worth living, it is easy to understand the fine and bitter scorn underlying the old Welsh name for Protestantism —*crefydd y Saeson*, "the religion of the Saxons."

Although a detailed consideration of the historical evidence of the strenuous efforts made to preserve Welsh Catholicism after the Reformation lies outside the scope of this work, it will not be inopportune to urge the importance of investigating this subject from the side of *Welsh* history, instead of allowing the testimony to the zeal and labours of

Welsh Catholics to be merged in the general history of English Catholicism.

The subject deserves independent treatment, and ought not to suffer the indignity of being thrust in the background by a disdainful reference to "see under *England*." We are indebted to a very able Welsh writer, W. Llywelyn Williams, K.C., M.P., for paving the way in this direction. His article in the *Cymmrodor* (1901), "Welsh Catholics on the Continent," gives us a valuable account, based on contemporary records, of the labours of Welsh Catholics during this eventful period. It is a noteworthy fact that many eminent Welshmen played a leading part in the work of reviving the Benedictine Order in this country. And it seems pitiful to think that the work of so many truculent Puritan mediocrities should be so well known to the Welsh people, while the life of a saintly Welsh Benedictine like Dom John Roberts, a native of Merioneth—scholar, patriot, and martyr—is allowed to be a closed book to the average Welshman.

His Life—*A Benedictine Martyr in England*—has been written by Dom Bede Camm, and deserves to be more widely known in Wales. A few passages from the *Cymmrodor* article, "Welsh Catholics on the Continent," may here be appropriately quoted, just to give the reader an idea of how the whole field of evidence is viewed by the writer:

"It is a commonplace of history that the Reformation was not welcomed in Wales. Chapuys, the Imperial Ambassador at the Court of Henry VIII., constantly refers to the Principality as being passionately loyal to the old Faith; and Catholic plotters for two generations invariably took into account, in estimating their chances of success, the *unswerving devotion of Welshmen to the See of Rome.* Relics of ancient Catholic practices and beliefs have survived to our own day.

"*Mari Lwyd* still cheers the winter nights of rural Wales, though few know that it represents the mystery Play of Holy Mary. Children—the truest conservatives—even yet

make the Sign of the Cross when seeking to avert an evil, or taking upon themselves a binding oath. The *gwylnos* survives in Puritan setting to mark the permanence in the human heart of that pathetic care for the departed which gave rise to the practice of saying Masses for the dead.

"These are small matters, it may be; but that they have survived at all after two centuries of the sternest Puritan discipline is surely significant of the strong hold which the old Faith had taken on the Welsh people. 'The Welsh counties tell the Earl of Pembroke,' writes the Duke of Feria to his master, Philip of Spain, in the first year of Elizabeth, 'to send no preachers across the Marches, or they will not return *alive*.'

"Catholicism stood for more than the old religion; it stood also for Welsh nationality. Protestantism was an alien plant. Men looked back to pre-Reformation days as a time when Wales was not a mere part of England, when the Welsh language was not tabooed in the Courts, and when Welsh laws

and customs were still observed. All that was best and noblest in Welsh story was intertwined with the history of the roofless abbeys which remain to this day monuments of Welsh piety and art.

"Strata Florida and Aberconway in their ruins still testified to the dream of Welsh independence; Valle Crucis and Tintern embodied in their deathless beauty the finest and most spiritual aspirations of the Cymry; Carmarthen and Talley had given refuge and solace to the greatest Welsh bards when stricken with age and poverty. Margam and Neath, Cymmer, Basingwerk, and Strata Marcella—every monastery was a museum stored with priceless treasures of Welsh poetry and romance.

"It is strange that, while this fact is clearly recognized by historians, no attempt should have been made hitherto to trace the efforts of Welsh Catholics to keep alive the flame on the altar.

"The reason for this omission is not far to seek. Welshmen, under the influence of Pro-

testantism, have been more concerned to discover the origin and to trace the development of Puritanism than to ascertain the stages in the decay of Catholicism in Wales. The heroic labours of Welsh priests in the mission-field; the torture and martyrdom of some; and the lifelong exile of others, have not been put down to the credit of Wales, but have been indiscriminately reckoned as *part of the history of English Catholicism.*"

The decay of Catholicism in Wales was, in fact, a slow process. As late as the eighteenth century, Dr. Erasmus Saunders, writing in 1722 on the state of religion in the Diocese of S. David's, deplores the presence of survivals of some of the old Catholic ceremonies that once prevailed in Wales. "Young people," he says, "take particular delight in learning old Church melodies at their wakes, solemn festivals, and funerals, and in their Churches in the winter season between All Saints' and Candlemas.

"Thus do these poor people retain this most laudable practice of the primitive Church."

"Another ancient practice—viz., that of crossing themselves, as the first Christians were used to do upon many occasions—is much in use among them, with a short ejaculation that through the Cross of Christ they may be safe or saved. In the most mountainous parts, where old customs and simplicity is most prevailing, they go to the graves of their friends to pray for them; bring candles and torches to church on Christmas Day, and set them on the graves of friends, and then sing their *Halsingod*. They also in their ejaculations invoke the Holy Virgin and other saints; for Mair Wen, Iago, Teilaw Mawr, Celer, Celynog, and others, are often thus remembered, *as if they had hardly yet forgotten the use of praying to them*. Springs and fountains are dedicated to these saints, and they do at certain times go and bathe themselves in them, and sometimes leave some small oblations behind them by way of acknowledgment for the benefit they have, or hope to have, thereby. Nay, in some parts of North Wales they continue in

effect still to pay for *obits* by giving oblations to their ministers at the burials of their friends (as they were formerly taught to do, to pray them out of Purgatory). So that if we have not yet quite unlearned the errors of our Popish ancestors, it is because the doctrines of the Reformation begun about 200 years ago in England have not yet effectually reached us." *

It would be difficult, indeed, to quote a more convincing testimony to the extraordinary tenacity with which the Welsh peasantry clung, in spite of all opposition, to the beliefs and customs of their Catholic forefathers, even in the eighteenth century.

Even in Puritan times the common people used their "rosaries."

Old Vicar Prichard, of Llandovery, who lived in the seventeenth century, tells his readers in *Canwyll y Cymry :*

"Ofer rhedeg dros *baderau.*"
"It is useless running over your *beads.*"

Leland, writing late in the sixteenth

* *State of Religion in the diocese of S. David's*, pp. 30–33.

century, quotes a writer to the following effect:

"The people (in Wales) do carry beads openly and make such clappings with them in the Church that a man can hardly hear the minister read for the noise thereof, alleging that they can read upon their beads as well as others upon their books."

There is a very old Welsh proverb:

"Bid lyfn dy baderau
Bid rydlyd dy arfau."

"Let thy Rosary be smooth and thy weapons rusty."

The historian of *The Cistercian Abbey of Strata Florida* writes in a similar strain in regard to the Catholic survivals among the natives in Cardiganshire:

"It is said that the old Faith died hard in the vicinity of the Abbey, and that up to within the last century or so, and until the rise of Dissent in the time of Rowlands of Llangeitho and Harris of Trevecca, the descendants of the people who had lived under the rule of the Abbots and monks

clung to the Roman Catholic religion, and that even now may still be detected observances and customs which may be traced to the influence of the great abbey of Strata Florida" (p. 175).

There still exists a remarkable vessel which once belonged to the Cistercians of Strata Florida. It is known as the *Cup of Nanteos*, and is supposed to have formed a portion of the True Cross.

It was, and still is, considered to possess healing virtues. Sick men had to drink wine or some liquor out of it. It is possibly an old mazer-cup.

We have now dealt very briefly with the main subjects connected with the history of Catholicism in mediæval Wales and in the period of its decay in Puritan times. It would be quite easy to add almost indefinitely to the testimonies already quoted, even from published sources, apart from the manuscript material which is still buried in various public and private collections.

No attempt has been made in this brochure

to investigate the great mass of evidence which can be gleaned from antiquarian researches. Wales is full of the relics and memorials of a Catholic age; its traditions, proverbs, place-names, language, folk-lore, customs, devotional habits, literature, monumental remains, and even its superstitions, reflect the ages of a long-established Catholicism. The facts cannot seriously be disputed. The Protestant reader may deplore them, but he cannot dispute them.

The method adopted in this short treatise, which, by reason of its brevity, only touches the fringe of the subject, has been to give the bare facts of the religious history of Wales—the *ipsissima verba* of the bards, chroniclers, and ecclesiastical writers—without any attempt to embroider the facts with superfluous comment.

The facts are easily accessible, and they speak for themselves.

They show that Catholicism was the old religion of Wales, and that even at the end of the seventeenth century it lingered in

various forms and in pathetic ways amid the hills and valleys of Wales, like an exiled spirit, banished from its home, wandering wistfully among the ruins of its ancestral hearth, and loth to leave its ancient abode.

It is doubtful whether Puritanism will continue indefinitely to satisfy and express the religious genius of the Celt. Signs are not wanting that the age of transition has arrived, and that the Call of the Past is likely to come with overwhelming power to a people so gifted, and so deeply attached to their ancient traditions—the inheritance of that ancient Faith which they have "loved long since and lost awhile."

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Printed in England.

BR 774 .D4 IMS
De Hirsch-Davies, John Edwyn
Catholicism in mediaeval
Wales

PONTIFICAL INSTITUTE
OF MEDIAEVAL STUDIES
59 QUEEN'S PARK
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